THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SCOTTISH FICTION : CHARACTER AND SYMBOL

CAROL E. ANDERSON

PH.D.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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Declaration : The thesis which follows was composed by me, and the work it presents is my own.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways in which women have been represented in Scottish fiction mainly by male writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

After a brief introductory consideration of related critical material, I argue that the distinctive cultural and historical experience of Scotland has been formative of a characteristically Romantic, symbolic fiction, with a strong realist aspect due partly to the importance of folk culture. Correspondingly women are generally represented in 'extreme' terms, often as symbolic figures, idealized or presented as sexual and threatening. More 'realistic' and sympathetic are the earthy peasant women, although they are frequently romanticized too; symbolically associated with national identity (a conscious preoccupation of Scottish writers, and indirectly powerful in effect) they play a non-developing role, and a tension between realism and romance is often unresolved.

Chapter Two considers women in Scott's influential fiction, which contains themes and raises critical questions important throughout this thesis. The roles of folk culture and religion, and the ideology of Romantic representations of women are discussed here, with reference to The Heart of Midlothian and other texts, and also as a preliminary to later analyses.

Religion, an important aspect of Scottish culture affecting later writers besides Scott, is the subject of my third chapter. This examines Calvinist attitudes to sexuality; a male desire for, but need to reject women is illustrated in fiction by Lockhart,

Hogg, Barrie, Stevenson and others. Despite sympathy for women in male-dominated Presbyterian society, many writers remain ambivalent. A typological tendency induces symbolic images of women, and a reaction against Calvinism sustains this impetus, with liberal theology encouraging a new but still restrictive idealization of 'the feminine'. In modern fiction Calvinism still contributes to the 'extreme' representation of gender roles.

The influences of Scott and religion have encouraged the development of Romantic forms and themes in Scottish fiction. Chapter Four examines the Romantic representation of women, pursuing critical issues already raised. The fantasy fiction of MacDonald and Lindsay demonstrates the symbolic use of 'the feminine', and I discuss the potentially limiting association of women with such themes as the imagination, nature, time and moral values, given a specifically Scottish context by Stevenson among others. The idealization of the peasant, and particularly the Highland woman, is most apparent in 'Fiona Macleod's' work, but I argue that Neil Gunn's use of female characters as Romantic symbols also demands serious questioning.

Gibbon's A Scots Quair explicitly and implicitly contains many of the themes already considered. Chapter Five therefore examines the multiple roles of the central character Chris, who is convincingly 'realized' but, like earlier female figures in Scottish fiction, symbolizes Romantic values and national identity, which limit her potential despite a new 'feminist' concern with the role of women in society.

I conclude that the representation of women in Scottish fiction has been and still is in some ways restricted and disappointing, although the influence of folk culture has helped produce some outstanding strong female characters. The most urgent critical task now is the recovery and consideration of 'lost' women writers and their versions of female experience and of Scotland.

CONTENTS

Note on References

The edition used in each case is the first edition unless otherwise stated. Exceptions include collected editions, of which the most frequently cited are:

Walter Scott, Waverley Novels Border Edition, 48 vols (London, 1892-4).

Robert Louis Stevenson Works Skerryvore Edition, 30 vols (London, 1924).

The first reference to a work in each chapter includes publication details.

Long titles of books and articles are given in abbreviated form after the first citation. For example, Northrop Frye The Secular Scripture : A Study of the Structure of Romance will be referred to as The Secular Scripture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SCOTTISH FICTION : A NEGLECTED TOPIC

II DEFINING AND CRITICIZING A NATIONAL TRADITION

III FEMINIST CRITICISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

IV SCOTTISH FICTION AND FEMINISM : THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

V IDENTIFYING IMAGES OF WOMEN : CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS

VI CRITICAL PROBLEMS, CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis sets out to examine critically some of the ways women have been represented in Scottish fiction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The argument starts, in this chapter, with some consideration of recent feminist criticism and recent Scottish literary criticism, drawing attention to the deficiencies as well as the strengths in each, and suggesting that appropriate elements from the various kinds of approach may be usefully applied in a critical area which has been very little studied. Successive chapters treat a number of large themes (folk culture, religion and romance) in relation to selected works of a number of authors ranging from Scott to Grassic Gibbon. The thesis concludes that the attempt to awaken sensitivity to the role of female characters in the fiction enlarges the critical debate, offering a new perspective on the field of Scottish literature, where the absence of a single 'tradition' makes the work of any critic necessarily exploratory.

I

It has been argued over recent years, with growing effect, by feminists and others that the ways in which women are represented in literature bear a complex relationship to history, society and ideology. Many images which seem 'natural' are, in fact, culturally produced. Feminist critics, challenging assumptions about the functions of criticism and critical disinterestedness, emphasize the importance of the insights into both literature

and society which can be gained from studying the representation of women.

It is particularly important to study images of women in fiction. The novel has arguably played a major role in forming society's vision of itself, and this has been of special significance for women. Women have been fictionalized - indeed mythologized - in powerful, often damaging and limiting ways; and they have also long been the chief consumers of fiction and thus most open to its influence. It seems likely, too, that female readers have tended to approach fiction with particular predispositions. Although men read and are affected by fiction, women probably attend with characteristic closeness to the representation of women, and carry the effects of their reading over into their own lives. [1] The feminist critical enterprise not only remarks the need for a new, illuminating perspective on fiction but does so with a certain degree of urgency. As the American poet and critic Adrienne Rich has suggested, 'Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history : it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves'. [2]

1 See Rachel Brownstein, Becoming a Heroine : Reading about Women in Novels (Harmondsworth, 1984). First published New York, 1982. All references are to the British edition.

2 'When we Dead Awaken : Writing as Re-Vision' in On Lies, Secrets and Silence:Selected Prose 1966-1978 (London, 1980), pp. 33-49 (p. 35). First appeared in collected form, United States, 1979; article first appeared in College English, 34, 1 (1972).

The aims of feminist criticism may be compared with those of certain other social and cultural groups. In her pioneering study of Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood stresses the importance, for Canadians, of knowing their literary heritage : 'Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as our literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately'. [3] Scottish literature, like Canadian literature, has been badly neglected and, despite a slowly evolving critical industry, has not yet been adequately charted. It both needs and deserves more serious attention, not only for its own sake, but because the critical study of Scottish literature can contribute to a more general understanding of Scottish culture and identity. There is a particularly pressing need for such critical scrutiny of Scottish fiction because Scotland, like women, has been represented to itself and the world through enduring and often restrictive myths, many established in literature, and carried through to popular culture.

Scottish women, through their sex and nationality, have been doubly mythologized, yet so far no critics have shown serious interest in tackling the subject of the ways in which women have been represented in Scottish fiction. Clearly there is a pressing need for such a study. An awareness of this has been shown by critics of film and media who have commented that 'We must fight images of Scotland that are pleasureable only for people outside of Scotland, and we must fight representations in which women are stereotypes or function only as symbols of this or that : spirit of the nation; mother of the earth. These symbols only exist so

3 Survival : A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto, 1972,) pp. 18-19.

that "man" can experience himself: his desire, his presence, his power'. [4]

In more academic contexts, however, there are few signs of awareness of the issues at stake, or interest in pursuing them. There has been some commentary in the works of a few critics, mostly dealing with individual authors. Thomas Crawford is well worth reading on the subject of Scott's heroines, and Alexander Welsh also makes some useful points, while Daniel Cottom offers a stimulating discussion of Scott's ideology. Among published critics of 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon', Douglas Young is one of the few to mention James Leslie Mitchell's interest in feminism, but he does not offer any sustained discussion of its effects in Mitchell's fiction. There are interesting isolated remarks elsewhere, but nothing of a more synthesized nature. One of the few critics to offer theorizing on Scottish fiction is F.R. Hart, whose brief discussion of the 'characterology' of Scottish fiction is valuable but could be developed further. [5]

4 'Woman, Women and Scotland: "Scotch Reels" and Political Perspectives', an edited version by Gillian Skirrow of papers presented by Douglas and Ouainé Bain during the Scotch Reels Debate at the 1982 Edinburgh International Film Festival, published in Cencrastus, 11 (New Year 1983), 3-6 (p. 5).

5 Thomas Crawford, Scott (revised edition, Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 77-80;
Alexander Welsh, The Hero of the Waverley Novels (New Haven and London, 1963), pp. 70-82;
Daniel Cottom, 'The Waverley Novels: Superstition and the Enchanted Reader', in ELH, 47 (1980), 80-101;
Douglas F. Young, Beyond the Sunset (Aberdeen, 1973), pp. 16-17;
F.R. Hart, The Scottish Novel (London, 1978), pp. 403-406.

Certainly, the subject brings particular difficulties with it. The lack of immediately related criticism leaves almost too much material open for discussion; but the lack of precedents produces particular problems. Both the 'feminist' and the Scottish aspects of the subject of this thesis demand the redefinition of previously dominant critical assumptions. The first serious issue to confront is one of definition: What is Scottish literature? Obviously, individual writers may be considered as Scottish by reason of birth, education and life; but any attempt to offer a more synthesized approach depends on seeing the literature in broad terms rather than as a collection of isolated texts. A number of existing critical surveys of Scottish literature offer grounds for viewing Scottish literature as an entity, rather than seeing it merely within the terms of English literature. [6] My study builds on this groundwork, working from the belief that it is valid to talk of Scottish literature, and implicitly defending this position throughout. However, the basis for discussion requires some further initial definition.

II

Many 'national' literatures are seen by their critics in terms of 'tradition'. In Britain there has been, most notably, the celebrated Leavisite 'Great Tradition' [7], postulated as English, although as some critics have pointed out it is only dubiously so, [8] based as it is in part on work by writers of American and Polish origins. Both in its Englishness and in its insistence

6 For instance, Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh, 1958); David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London, 1961); F.R. Hart, The Scottish Novel.

7 F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London, 1948).

8 For instance, Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (London, 1962), p. 3, and Cairns Craig, 'Peripheries', Cencrastus, 9 (Summer 1982), 3-9 (p. 4).

on the supremacy of types of fiction predominantly concerned with social 'realities' and complex moral issues - another definition of tradition which has been recently challenged [9] - the Leavisite 'tradition' seems increasingly open to debate in the 1980s.

This does not mean, of course, that a more flexible idea of 'tradition' may not be a useful one. Writers may set out to write within a perceived tradition. They may also write from within a shared context such as a common culture. The argument for the existence of a body of work which may be called 'Scottish literature' stresses the writers' shared cultural experience. A useful comparison for Scottish literature in this respect is American literature, especially American fiction. Although American literature now plays a dominant role in world culture, it previously had to define itself against a dominant European and especially English literary tradition. [10]

9 For instance, a critic with a dominant interest in fantasy writing suggests a tradition consisting of 'that stream which runs from the German Märchen through Carlyle, MacDonald, Carroll, Meredith, and Morris to Lewis, Lindsay and Tolkien'; see George P. Landow, 'And the World Became Strange: Realms of Literary Fantasy', in The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art, edited by Roger C. Schlobin (Brighton, 1982), pp. 105-142 (p. 106). See also John Fletcher, Novel and Reader (London and Boston, 1980), p. 123, for another suggested 'tradition' in the English language novel.

10 See Douglas Grant, 'Nathaniel Hawthorne II - Wizards Both', in Purpose and Place : Essays on American Writers (London and New York, 1965), pp. 27-33 (p. 31) : 'The cultural relation of New England to England at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not unlike that of Scotland to England rather earlier'.

American literature, like Scottish literature, is related to English literature, but grows out of different historical and cultural experiences. Early American writers, like Scottish writers, could not take for granted the identity of their subject, but had to define their culture even as they wrote about it. Critics of American literature, likewise, are often concerned to define American culture, and identify its workings in the literature, looking for distinctive American themes and motifs. Influential cultural historians such as Henry Nash Smith [11], and literary critics such as R.W.B. Lewis [12] have discussed the 'myth' of America as it appears in literature.

Lewis has suggested that we may see an 'analogy between the history of a culture - or of its thought and literature - and the unfolding course of a dialogue' (p. 1). The dialogue finds expression in different ways: 'and while the vision may be formulated in the orderly language of rational thought, it also finds its form in a recurring pattern of images - ways of seeing and sensing experience - and in a certain habitual story, an assumed dramatic design for the habitual life' (p. 3). In Lewis's thesis the religious culture of North America, the historical experience of the settlers, and their responses to their landscape and situation, combine to produce the distinctive 'myth' of America as the New World Garden, an Eden, with the recurring figure of the 'American Adam', and other related motifs and themes, which may be identified in the literature.

11 Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1950).

12. The American Adam : Innocence Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1955). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

The formal distinctiveness of American literature has also been argued by some critics. Charles Feidelson argues that American literature in the nineteenth century is distinctive for its symbolic qualities; of a number of fiction writers he says, 'Their symbolistic method is their title to literary independence'.[13] Richard Chase has discussed the thematic and formal characteristics of American literature, too, suggesting,

> The imagination that has produced much of the best and most characteristic American fiction has been shaped by the contradictions and not by the unities and harmonies of our culture. In a sense this may be true of all literatures of whatever time and place. Nevertheless, there are some literatures which take their form and tone from polarities, opposites, and irreconcilables, but are content to rest in and sustain them, or to resolve them into unities, if at all, only by special and limited means. The American novel tends to rest in contradictions and among extreme ranges of experience.[14]

This contrasts, Chase suggests, with the English novel, which 'has followed a middle way' (p. 2), which is 'notable for its great practical sanity, its powerful, engrossing composition of wide ranges of experience into a moral centrality and equability of judgement' (p. 2). The American novel tends instead to the use of romance forms, and to resolution 'in oblique, morally equivocal ways' (p. 1). Clearly, such generalizations cannot cover all examples, nor encompass all eventualities; but these attempts to define the characteristics of American fiction have proved influential, and are useful for the critics of Scottish literature also.

The problems faced by the critic of Scottish literature are similar. There is a need to grope for definition. Like critics

13. Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953), p. 4.

14 Chase, p. 1. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

of American fiction, theorists of Scottish fiction may usefully consider the ways in which the historical experience of Scotland, and aspects of its culture, such as religion, arguably give the fiction its characteristic themes, motifs and tone. Like American fiction, Scottish fiction may be seen as distinguished by distinctive images, and its own pattern or 'habitual story', which grows out of Scottish history and experience. Douglas Gifford has argued, for instance, that 'there existed from 1814 till 1914 a school of Scottish fiction with its own recurrent themes, and its own distinguishable symbolism'. [15] A number of different aspects of Scottish culture combine to produce such recurrent motifs as that of the 'divided family'.

Scottish fiction is also arguably distinctive for its symbolic and Romantic tendencies. Leavis himself noted (although only in a footnote) that an alternative tradition to the 'realistic' Great Tradition developed, a 'minor tradition' in his view, stemming from Wuthering Heights, and including The House with the Green Shutters. [16] If these novels were American, Richard Chase has argued, they would not seem minor or deviant but part of the dominant tradition, growing out of religious and other forces in American society. [17] It might be argued with equal justice that Emily Brontë's work could be considered instead as kin to a Scottish tradition of symbolic and Romantic writing, including, among many others, such works as Hogg's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner and Stevenson's The Master of Ballantrae, especially since she was steeped in the Scottish Blackwood's tradition and the work of

15 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of The Master of Ballantrae', in Stevenson and Victorian Fiction, edited by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 62-87 (p. 62).

16 Leavis, The Great Tradition, p. 27.

17 Chase, p. 4.

Scott and Byron.

It may well be objected, of course, that the identification of supposed traditions of this kind arises from a determination to see a pattern. Marcus Cunliffe has warned of this danger in the American context: 'If myth and symbol and archetype are hunted with sufficient diligence they can always be found'. [18] However, he concedes that American fiction does appear to have 'curious features' (p. 373), and a similar point might be made with respect to Scottish fiction, which is not to imply it is deviant, but that it is in some ways distinctive. Certainly, English fiction is itself perhaps less solidly 'realist' than is often acknowledged - witness, for instance, Leavis's early dislike of Dickens, who did not fit into his thesis. Nevertheless, Scottish writers do seem to favour symbolic and Romantic modes to a marked degree. It is surely significant that many of the 'alternative' traditions postulated by critics of English fiction incorporate a notable number of Scottish writers. [19] I am not suggesting that Scottish fiction is 'essentially' symbolic or mythic in some immutable or finite way, but that this appears to be a significant aspect of much Scottish writing. Viewing the work in this way is valid and potentially illuminating, and my approach will stress this.

18 The Literature of the United States (revised edition, Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 372. (First published, London 1954) Further references, to the revised edition, are given after quotations in the text.

19 For instance, Robert Kiely in The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), despite his title, discusses Scott's Waverley and Hogg's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner. George P. Landow's list of fantasy works already noted includes Carlyle, MacDonald and Lindsay.

I am aware that there are other significant kinds of Scottish writing which I do not consider at length in this thesis. There is a 'tradition' of realist, often urban fiction in Scotland, which I do not consider in detail; I am thinking here of the 'urban' fiction of Galt and especially of the twentieth-century novels of Glasgow and the west. Yet while this kind of fiction on one level tends to be devoted to the particularization of material 'reality', the representation of character might still be considered fruitfully in terms of symbol and myth, and my approach is not necessarily irrelevant.[20] The earthy folk tradition, too, is from one angle 'realistic', but evades reduction to description as such; there is clearly a non-realist aspect to the supernatural tales of Hogg or Stevenson, for instance. The work of any one author - notably Scott, of course - will often be outstandingly multi-faceted. Obviously there are also problems of description. The danger of using words such as 'realistic' are manifest. I adopt such terms in their most generally accepted sense and make no claims of definitiveness in their use; it is to be hoped the use of terminology is usually clear in the context.

Besides the characteristic motifs and the distinctive symbolic aspects of Scottish fiction, it is, perhaps, like American fiction, 'extreme' in both form and tone, partly because of the way in which the national culture works through in it, but also because of Scottish writers' self-consciousness about the whole question of identity. The issue of identity is a problem to be confronted

20 Douglas Gifford points out that some novels often viewed as 'realist', such as The House with the Green Shutters, may also be seen as 'essentially Romantic and symbolic'; see 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of The Master of Ballantrae', p. 68.

by both writer and critic. [The Scottish writer is almost always] conscious of his or her audience, uncertain as to whether or not it will recognize Scottish phenomena and especially Scots language. The Scottish experience of exile, too, has had its effects, not only because it has debilitated national life, but because it has affected the themes and tone characteristic of Scottish fiction; it is easier to idealize or sentimentalize at a distance. Partly as a result, the sentimentalization and commercial exploitation of nostalgia is a feature of some nineteenth-century Scottish fiction, which provokes in turn a redefinition of national identity that is bitter in tone and violent in imagery, such as is found in the so-called 'anti-kailyard' novels of Brown and Hay. The issue of identity cannot be ignored, as its effects are profound and since it is so often a central concern; yet while writers are often deeply preoccupied with the question of Scottish identity, it has been suggested that the modern Scottish writer often seems 'lacking in identification with his roots', [21] so that, as the critic says, 'the paradox results that there is a Scottish fictional tradition but that that tradition is precisely about the writers' repeated sense of there being no tradition' (p. 29). The critic of Scottish fiction has to be sensitive to all of these issues.

III

The drawing-up of a tradition in relation to cultural history and consciousness, then, is one of a number of ways in which critics may tackle the idea of a national literature, although there are

21 Douglas Gifford, 'In Search of the Scottish Renaissance - The Reprinting of Scottish Fiction', Cencrastus, 9, (Summer 1982), 26-30 (p. 29). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

no clear rules of definition. An alternative (although implicitly related) way of looking at fiction, which has not so far been adopted in the Scottish context, is the feminist approach, which draws on the ideas and methodologies of a more general body of feminist critical theory.

Annette Kolodny, for instance, has argued that literary history is a fiction of our own making, and that 'our sense of a "literary history", and, by extension, our confidence in a so-called "historical" canon, is rooted not so much in any definitive understanding of the past, as in our need to call up and utilize the past on behalf of a better understanding of the present'. [22] Furthermore, she suggests, the 'meanings' we appropriate from texts are deeply influenced by our own predispositions; literary history may be re-drawn from a feminist point of view, and new critical approaches adopted to yield different meanings from old texts (pp. 31-37). This view is, of course, shared by other feminist critics. Catherine Belsey also questions the 'Great Tradition', suggesting that a feminist reading of fiction is equally valid. It may not be exhaustive, as she admits, but it does at least state its partiality (in both senses of the word), rather than claiming finality as does Leavis. The feminist critic makes apparent her assumptions, whereas the Leavis type of approach tends not to acknowledge the underlying values on which it is based, although these are no more 'objective' or absolute than any others. [23]

22 Annette Kolodny, 'Dancing through the Minefield : Some observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism', in Men's Studies Modified : The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines, edited by Dale Spender (Oxford, New York, etc. 1981), pp. 23-42 (p. 31).

23 Catherine Belsey, 'Re-reading the great tradition', in Re-Reading English, edited by Peter Widdowson (London and New York, 1982), pp. 121-135 (p. 122).

Feminist criticism is developing in a number of different directions, but one type of criticism which has already fuelled a large number of critical studies has been the study of the representation of women in fiction. A considerable body of feminist criticism now exists which takes as its subject the representation of women in English fiction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although a variety of approaches is taken to the work of individual writers, the more synthesized critical works tend to discuss the fiction in terms of its relation to society, with most of the critics comparing the images of women in the fiction with the actual conditions and experience of women of the time.[24] Such criticism serves a valuable purpose but has its limitations, as Nina Auerbach has pointed out: 'Generally writers accept a mythic dimension in American literature and culture that they have denied to the English... Until recently students of British culture have ignored the prevalence of mythic constructs in this seemingly solid world'.[25] Her own work offers one corrective to this gap in the critical enterprise.

American feminists certainly seem to have been more willing to consider social and fictional mythic constructs; in the context of their own culture they have been challenging the accepted 'myths' of American culture and the standard ways of reading them.

24 For instance: Françoise Basch, Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel 1837-67, translated by Anthony Rudolf (London, 1974); Patricia Stubbs, Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920 (Brighton, 1979); Patricia Thomson, The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal 1837-1873 (London, 1956).

25 Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1982), p. 232.

Judith Fryer has observed that the myth of the 'American Adam' has dominated cultural interpretations of American literature, but that the scholars, mostly male, and the products of male-dominated society, 'ignore Eve, and strangely so, for she was a figure of primary importance to nineteenth-century thinkers, and especially to novelists'. [26] Fryer's analysis of the representation of women in nineteenth-century American fiction, like many of the male analyses, argues for the distinctiveness of American culture, and the symbolic and 'mythic' quality of the literature; but by drawing attention to and analyzing images of women she redresses an imbalance in cultural interpretation.

More trenchantly, another critic, Judith Fetterley, draws attention to the need for a female perspective when she remarks that a problematic relationship with American literature is forced on the woman by the fact that it is 'frequently dedicated to defining what is peculiarly American about experience and identity. Given the pervasive male bias of this literature, it is not surprising that in it the experience of being American is equated with the experience of being male'. [27] The woman reader is thus effectively excluded not only from the literature but from a sense of her identity as an American, and experiences a sense of powerlessness which is not only 'literary' but has political significance as well. Rather than accepting the supposedly 'universal' meaning of the literature, Fetterley suggests, it is

26 The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel (New York, 1976), p. x.

27 The Resisting Reader:A Feminist Approach to American Fiction (Bloomington and London, 1978), p. xii. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

important to analyze the designs and effects of 'masculine' literature: 'To examine American fictions in light of how attitudes toward women shape their form and content is to make available to consciousness that which has been largely left unconscious and thus to change our understanding of these fictions, our relation to them, and their effect on us'. (pp. xi-xii).

IV

Like these female critics of American literature, and of the critical strategies which have traditionally been brought to it, I feel that the analyses of Scottish literature and culture which have appeared up to now have been too heavily masculine in emphasis. One way in which this masculine bias may be redressed is by considering the representation of women in Scottish fiction.

The literature which I discuss, like that discussed by Fryer and Fetterley, will be largely the work of male authors. Judith Fryer's defence of her discussion of male authors and exclusion from her discussion of female writers is that 'literature is a reflection of culture, and culture in nineteenth-century America was still predominantly male'. [28] The fact that most of the fictions which are usually considered to be the major works of Scottish literature are the work of male writers is probably also to some extent a reflection of a male-dominated culture. Both American and Scottish fiction would appear to contrast strangely with English fiction in this respect, however, since many of the major novelists of nineteenth-century England are female: George Eliot, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell, among

28 Fryer, p. 26.

others. Although English culture was doubtless male-dominated, this is less strikingly apparent in the fiction, than it is, on the surface at least, in the case of Scottish and American fiction. There may be cultural reasons for this; perhaps the religious cultures of Scotland and of America were particularly uncongenial for women writing. But this is a problematic argument. It might be suggested less diffidently that in cultures which for a variety of reasons were under pressure, the most disadvantaged members of the community suffered most and women, for this reason, found it more difficult than men to find a fictional voice - or a publisher. English culture, materially better-off, and without the problem of national identity, could apparently nurture female writers more successfully. However, it is also likely that in considering the canon of Scottish literature, I have been heavily influenced by previous critics and literary historians, who have established what is there, and what is 'worth' looking at.

Thus far the canon has been dominated by male writers. The work of women writers in Scotland has undoubtedly been badly neglected, but while it should certainly be retrieved from oblivion, I feel it merits a separate and detailed study. [29]

29 A number of studies of women writers have appeared in both the British and American contexts e.g. Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own : British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton, New Jersey/London, 1977); Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York, 1976/London, 1978). An interesting recent addition to the existing body of 'American Myth' commentary is Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her : Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill and London, 1984).

Women writers, whether feminist or not, arguably have a somewhat different perspective on experience and literature. Judith Fryer has suggested that 'the awakening of female writers to a sense of their own identity ... begins at the turn of the century and is properly the subject of a study of women in twentieth-century literature'.[30] I agree that, especially in relation to the representation of women, women writers do need to be considered separately, although I feel 'the awakening' takes place somewhat earlier than that. Even a writer such as Margaret Oliphant, well known for her opposition to feminism, reveals some interesting contradictions and complexities of attitude. To take this into account in my discussion would further complicate an already complicated set of issues. Hence, although this is a matter of regret on my part, the following pages will deal mainly with the work of male writers who have, after all, created and disseminated the images of women which have until now been most apparent and hence most influential.

Although I have thus omitted certain areas of inquiry, the period covered in my discussion is still a large one. The ambitious nature of this project is largely a response to the lack of critical attention to the subject and a felt need to chart points on the large map of Scottish fiction. In covering the period from Scott through to Gibbon I hope not only to cover a period in which the role of women in society and literature is more self-consciously considered, but to illustrate,from a new point of view, some ways in which Scottish fiction develops.

30 Fryer, p. 26.

Like Judith Fryer in her survey of images of women in nineteenth-century American fiction, I argue that certain ways of representing women recur in Scottish fiction, along with certain kinds of situation and theme. This has already been remarked upon briefly by F.R. Hart:

> Certain characters cluster repeatedly. Prominent in the domestic grouping is the mother, often stronger and more practical than the father, often alone. Galt's matriarchs are more naturally humane than, for example, Scott's important male figures, who are, by contrast with the Jeanie Deanses, unprincipled, quixotic, or passive. Oliphant's Margaret Maitland is the stoic survivor of male divisiveness and immaturity. MacDonald may be the exception that proves the complex rule; he stresses the quest for the Father, but not, finally, the earthly father. Matriarchalism is strikingly evident in Blake, Gibbon, Gunn, and Barke; Jenkins's strongest figure is Bell McShelvie. Kennaway's Mary, Stella, and Susan are strong antagonists of male folly and avarice. Iain Smith remembers the Clearances through one lonely, brave old woman, as, in a different way, Barrie's Thrums is seen through the eyes of another.[31]

These generalizations serve a useful purpose in offering a starting place for discussion and debate, but Hart's commentary is frustrating in its inconclusiveness and for what it conspicuously ignores and <u>fails</u> to say. Although he notes the recurrence of the mother figure, for example, he offers no possible reasons for this; and he also fails to note the significant number of <u>oppressed</u> mother figures which counterbalance what he describes as the 'matriarchal' images. His use of the term 'matriarchal' is itself problematic, ignoring the ambiguities contained in some of the fictions to which he alludes, and failing to consider the ideology of the works more critically. Some of his remarks are misleading; 'humane' does not seem the best adjective to describe Galt's Leddy Grippy in <u>The Entail</u>, surely the most important of his so-called 'matriarchs'. I share Hart's view that there are recurrent

31 <u>The Scottish Novel</u>, p. 403.

'clusters' of characters, but I propose to offer a more comprehensive and critical analysis.

I suggest that there are greater 'extremes' in the representation of women in Scottish fiction than is generally characteristic of English fiction of the period. In Scottish fiction we find sexual women, in contrast with the 'sexual timidity, even hypocrisy, of most mainstream Victorian fiction'.[32] In this, Scottish fiction perhaps has more in common with nineteenth-century European fiction. At the same time, there are striking ambiguities in the fiction; ambiguities on the part of authors towards their fictional women, and formal tensions as well. Female characters are often heavily symbolic or 'mythic', and there is sometimes a conflict between symbolic and 'realistic' urges in the fiction. All these matters are bound up with the question of national identity.

My analysis will concentrate on the representation of women, but the issue of masculinity cannot be fully separated from this. It is indeed noticeable that Scotland is often perceived and represented as intensely 'masculine'.[33] Although there may be a degree of mimesis in the representation of men and masculinity, the issues at stake would seem to be more complex than this and will be at least touched on in the following pages.

32 Stubbs, p. 35.

33 This is observable in diverse contexts. In an academic context there is this remark, for instance: 'The Scottish speech is virile, and they are outstandingly a virile people'; see T.E. Jessop, 'The Misunderstood Hume', in Hume and the Enlightenment: Essays presented to Ernest Campbell Mossner (Edinburgh and Austin, Texas, 1974), edited by William B. Todd, pp. 1-13 (p. 2). See also Christopher Harvie, Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707-1977 (London, 1977), p. 218, commenting on Gordon Williams's From Scenes Like These which has, he says, 'resonances which are peculiarly Scots, like the booze-propelled machismo'. The representation of Scotland in male terms has been commented on generally in 'Woman, Women and Scotland: "Scotch Reels" and Political Perspectives'.

In order to discuss the representation of women - and men - more comprehensively, it is essential to consider such aspects of Scottish culture as religion, class and history, for the Scottish writer has generally remained, as I have suggested, self-conscious about the question of Scottish identity, and these are all identifiable aspects of national identity to which writers turn for purposes of definition. Sometimes these are issues which are consciously dealt with; sometimes they work more diffusely in the fiction. Over the following pages I will attempt to identify some of the important recurring images of women, and place them in the context of certain particularly significant and formative aspects of Scottish culture. At this juncture I present only an outline of the issues, which will be dealt with at greater length and in more detail in the course of the thesis.

V

Robert Palfrey Utter and Gwendolyn Bridges Needham identify what they describe as 'the two classes of women of literature, the submissive and the imperious, those who obey and those who command'.[34] They comment that the submissive or 'Griselda' type of female character is far more typical of English fiction than her imperious counterpart: 'in her class appear the majority of her successors, the heroines of the English novel, which is middle class from the start, and the middle-class code and imagination exclude the Cleopatra type as beyond its pale and beyond its comprehension' (p. 9).

34 Pamela's Daughters (London, 1937), p. 8. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Scottish fiction is characteristically a good deal less middle class in origin than English fiction, and features more 'extreme' types of character, including many strikingly strong and assertive female figures. The significance of folk culture is a distinctive aspect of Scottish fiction; many of Scott's strong and important female characters are folk heroines. A number of important Scottish writers are themselves of the rural working class - notably Hogg and Gibbon, and more ambiguously Barrie - and often create female characters who are assertive, lively, and characteristically more explicitly sexual than we expect of the English nineteenth-century, middle-class fictional heroine. The fictional women created by writers of the 'peasant' class are not usually unduly idealized, although as time wears on, there are cultural pressures encouraging a Romantic tendency, and writers in the Scottish folk tradition also sometimes have difficulty reconciling the 'native' tradition with more genteel, anglicized or Romantic modes.

There are 'submissive' women in Scottish fiction, too, but rather than being middle-class creations such women are often symbolic figures. A Romantic interest in issues of power leads to 'extreme' images, both of submission and assertion. Sir Walter Scott is fascinated by images of aristocratic power, so that class is again a major factor; but another significant force in the concern with power is Calvinism.

Like studies of the representation of women in American fiction, especially of the nineteenth century, any critical account of Scottish fiction must register the importance of religion in Scottish culture. It is bound up closely with ideas of national identity, and is a preoccupation, both conscious and unconscious, of many Scottish writers.

The native Calvinist consciousness enforces an awareness of female sexuality, and contributes to the appearance of the sexual woman in fiction, in the works of writers like Lockhart and Hogg. However, the intense moral attitudes characteristic of Calvinism, identifiable in some writers, mean that sexual and assertive women are often shown as threatening, and are usually destroyed or rejected in order to maintain the moral order; although many authors do show sympathy for women in a repressive Presbyterian society. Douglas Gifford among others has observed the significance of Calvinism for Scottish fiction, commenting on the 'sharp ambivalences' sometimes found in Presbyterian fiction; [35] and ambivalence of attitude toward women radically affects the fiction both thematically and in a formal sense.

35 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of The Master of Ballantrae', p. 62.

The continued power of Calvinist thinking sustains a typological and symbolic mode of representation which expresses Calvinist moral attitudes towards women and means they are often somewhat one-dimensional figures in the fiction. An increasing tendency to represent Scottish identity in symbolic terms produces fiction in the early modern period in which Calvinism is represented by extreme masculinity and images of oppressed women are recurrent. Many Scottish writers, however, react strongly against Calvinism, offering in response inflated images of 'femininity', idealized women and mother figures. The symbolic mode of representation sometimes co-exists uneasily with a more 'realistic' impetus.

The recurrence of symbolic rather than 'realistic' female characters in Scottish fiction is due in part to Calvinism, but also to a Romantic tendency in fiction that is partly the result of the influence of Scott and the Enlightenment. A sense, created by them, that narrative is connected to the past, while the present lacks narrative potential, induces a frequent adoption of the structures of romance, which persists even in the twentieth century, since romance seems to offer a 'universal' framework of narrative.

Within the romance form the female has a secondary and proscribed role, often representing aspects of the hero's experience. She is often 'extreme'; either idealized, or shown as threatening, and to be rejected. The ambiguities characteristic of Romanticism are striking. Scottish writers of 'fantasy' use romance structures; but romance is also important in works which have a specific Scottish context. Within these, women are liable to be associated with certain recurring clusters of ideas. Some of these are familiar

from Romanticism: women are linked with the past, imagination, disorder, nature and the emotions. However, in fictions of 'national' identity, in which we characteristically find patterns of opposition, women are often associated especially with the Scottish Highlands, while men are associated with the Scottish Lowlands and an opposed set of values. A recurrent and central figure in Scottish fiction, as a result, is the folk heroine, often a Highland woman. Despite the genuine, earthy folk culture of Scotland, much fiction is apt to romanticize Scottish rural women characters. This tendency is exemplified in extreme form by William Sharp's adoption of a female, Highland persona: Sharp made himself known to the world as 'Fiona MacLeod'. The Scottish peasant woman is sometimes presented somewhat whimsically, sometimes endowed with 'mythic' significance, and used as a symbol of the transcendence of history. The tension between 'mythic' and 'realistic' in the presentation of such characters can prove a problem in the fiction.

Images of women in Scottish fiction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should, of course, be seen against a larger backdrop of English and European fiction. I have not room to discuss the common historical background fully here, and I assume that much may be to some extent taken for granted, since so much data and commentary on the wider situation have already been made available. [36] The period covered by this thesis is one of complex historical and social change, with a growing movement on the part of women to achieve an equal role in society, which is evidenced in literature. Some writers feel deeply threatened, and this is shown

36 e.g. in some of the works dealing with the representation of women in English fiction already mentioned.

by a characteristic preoccupation with the woman as predator in late nineteenth-century art. Interest in, and sympathy for women are observable in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and Flaubert's Madame Bovary, and in England, in works by, among others, Hardy and Meredith. There is, however, little direct interest in 'the Woman question' in Scotland, until well into the twentieth century, although some earlier writers do show an awareness of certain of the issues.

Other major social changes and shifts in ideas, such as the erosion of Christianity, the growth of Darwinism, and the development of theory related to sex by thinkers such as Havelock Ellis, and in Scotland, Patrick Geddes, would certainly have affected Scottish writers, and these changes should be borne in mind. Similarly, historical events, such as World War I, registered significantly on the consciousness of Scottish writers, and the effects can be seen in the fiction.

However, given the extent to which such material has already been discussed elsewhere, my thesis concerns itself less with the reflection of social change generally in the fiction than with the particular pressures on Scottish writers, and their responses. The wider situation cannot be ignored, but it seems more important to deal here with the distinctive features of Scottish writing; the fictional images of women which are created out of the culture of Scotland itself.

It may be argued, of course, that the 'characteristic' images of women in Scottish fiction are very close to those in English fiction, and that, for instance, ambivalence of attitude towards

women is characteristic of English as well as of Scottish writers. This is undoubtedly true. Nonetheless, the intensity of Calvinist morality produces distinctive psychological stresses and a preoccupation with sexuality and guilt, which is,in my view , particularly conspicuous in Scottish fiction. Similarly,a more intense kind of Scottish Romanticism which induces 'extreme' images of women may be partly an outgrowth of Scottish Calvinism, as well as a response to specifically Scottish cultural and historical factors. It may also be argued that the 'mythic' mode of representation of women is not unique to Scotland, and again this is certainly true. Women are used symbolically, and in a more general way, mythically,in English fiction; in a period when the fruitful myths of culture are being eroded, artists have to 'find some sphere where there is still a mythical residue which can provide the metaphorical possibilities necessary for the making of art'. [37] The myth of 'femininity' has been a persistent one, offering through such ideas as the 'otherness' and mystery of 'Woman' just such possibilities to the artist. 'The feminine' is used symbolically by many writers well into the twentieth century, a post-Romantic tendency encouraged further by the modernist quest for 'selfhood', and the artistic use of Jungian ideas of wholeness analyzed in terms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. 'The feminine' has been of significance in the works of such major writers as Joyce and Forster.

However, while these writers turn to the myth of femininity to give order and meaning to the modern world, in Scotland writers turn to 'the feminine' more particularly in reaction against certain aspects of the native culture. 'The feminine' gains special force -

37 Lisa Appignanesi, Femininity and the Creative Imagination: A Study of Henry James, Robert Musil and Marcel Proust (London, 1973), p. 14.

and a specially Scottish dimension - because of the intense revolt against Calvinism, which is perceived as 'masculine', and Scottish, and to some extent against the dominant Scottish Enlightenment values of reason and rationality, also conventionally defined as 'masculine'. Furthermore, while many modernist writers draw on 'myth' in a general sense - Joyce uses Greek myth for instance - Neil Gunn looks to the latent mythical 'meaning' of his own culture. The recurrent image of the folk heroine in the work of Gunn and others is no doubt partly attributable to the retention in Scotland of traditional rural lifestyles, and the continued importance of folk culture. Whereas Hardy's Tess leaves the land in the nineteenth century, Gibbon's Chris Guthrie chooses to stay there even in the twentieth century. However, the persistent invoking of the Scottish folk heroine is also a consequence of the potential such a figure has for being endowed with a Romantic, mythic 'meaning', which is associated with the idea of Scottishness, since folk culture has a specifically national significance attached to it. The Scottishness of the mythic heroine may prescribe her fate. While Chris Guthrie, for example, shares some of the life-affirming qualities of Molly Bloom, she is not allowed to survive. This is not only because of the life-denying qualities of modern - and Scottish - society, but because Chris, as peasant and woman, has a national significance. On one level Chris Guthrie represents Scotland itself, and in serving such a symbolic function, is doomed, because Scotland is perceived to be dying.

The representation of women in Scottish fiction cannot, therefore, be separated out from issues of national identity which contribute to the multi-levelled symbolic significance often attached

to Scottish fictional women. Such issues affect tone as well; the writer in exile may write with nostalgia for the Motherland, or with bitterness for the Motherland betrayed and exploited by others, or with guilt for the Motherland which he himself has left behind. F.R. Hart has commented on the many problems raised by these issues of identity in Scottish fiction: 'The burdens of multiple role are a part of character in Scottish fiction. They are also a central meaning in that fiction, a sometimes desperate expression of the problem of identity in a national culture doubted, polarized, multilevelled'.[38] This appears to be particularly applicable to female characters who, like Jeanie Deans, Dark Mairi or Chris Guthrie, have a central role to play. As Hart remarks, 'With such scope, one sometimes finds the tendency to force implication, to make the particular mean too much on too many levels, with the coordinate effects of sentimentality and abstraction'. (p. 406). Thematic and aesthetic issues cannot be separated in discussing the representation of women in Scottish fiction, and both are bound up with the idea of national identity. Over the following pages I will discuss such issues both generally and with more detailed reference to specific texts.

The next chapter will look at the work of a single writer, Walter Scott, who exerted a considerable influence on Scottish fiction, and whose work exemplifies many of the thematic concerns of Scottish writers, both conscious and unconscious, particularly folk culture and religion. This chapter will focus particularly

38 Hart, The Scottish Novel, p. 405. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

on the importance of romance and Romanticism in relation to the representation of women in Scott's fiction, preparatory to discussion of their significance in later works.

The third chapter will extract as its main theme the influence of religion in Scottish fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, considering especially the importance of Calvinism for the representation of women. I will offer a broad view of a considerable variety of material, but will look particularly at fiction by Lockhart, Hogg, Barrie and MacDonald.

My fourth chapter argues the considerable significance of romance forms and Romantic themes in Scottish fiction especially of the early modern and modern periods, suggesting that their interaction with Scottish culture produces distinctive images of women. Again, some general commentary is followed by more specific discussion of the work of MacDonald, Lindsay, Stevenson, 'Fiona MacLeod' and Neil Gunn.

My fifth chapter will discuss the work of another single writer, James Leslie Mitchell, 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon', especially his major work A Scots Quair. I suggest that all the issues raised in the course of the thesis may be usefully discussed in the context of Gibbon's work, which draws together many of the formal and thematic concerns of previous Scottish writers including the important issue of national identity; at the same time, his writing raises some of the critical problems identified as recurring in Scottish fiction. Gibbon's work therefore is a suitable place to end my discussion, although as my brief conclusion remarks, there is still much left to be considered, not least the work of women writers.

VI

In discussing the representation of women in Scottish fiction there are, of course, no simple criteria by which to 'judge' the works under review. There are difficulties to be faced in talking about 'character' in fiction; so far there have been few systematic considerations of 'character' as a literary term.[39] The growing quantity of feminist critical theorizing and debate testifies to the difficulties feminists face in evolving a critical methodology, as well as the richness of the ideas that are developing. However, a feminist approach to the representation of characters which offers both textual and contextual analysis may be able to bring some fresh insights.[40]

Like Judith Fryer, I am concerned to show the way in which the cultural context produces particular ways of representing women in fiction. This is not only a matter of discussing aspects of Scottish culture, but of examining the workings in literature of the dominant male social order and ideology. Virginia Woolf long ago pointed out that women in fiction by male writers are not 'women' at all: 'Some are plainly men in disguise; others represent what men would like to be, or are conscious of not being; or again they embody that dissatisfaction and despair which afflict most people when they reflect upon the sorry condition of the human race'.[41]

39 See Rawdon Wilson, 'The Bright Chimera : Character as a Literary Term', in Critical Inquiry, 5, (1979), 725-749, for discussion of the problems.

40 See Annis Pratt 'The New Feminist Criticism', in Feminist Criticism, edited by Cheryl L. Brown and Karen Olson (Metuchen, New Jersey, and London, 1978), pp. 11-20 (p. 12). Article first published in College English 32, May 1971, 872-8.

41 'Men and Women' in Books and Portraits (London 1977), pp. 28-38 (p. 39). It appeared originally as a review of Léonie Villard, La Femme Anglaise au XIXème Siècle et son Evolution d'après le Roman Anglais Contemporain, in Times Literary Supplement, 18 March 1920.

The feminist critic maintains that it is a valid function of criticism to expose and discuss the assumptions and beliefs, consciously and unconsciously held, which lie behind the representation of women. This is not a case merely of examining the ideas of individual authors, but of considering critically such issues as the use of genre and convention, which are not themselves 'innocent', but grow out of, and perpetuate, male-dominated ideologies. It is essential to examine the attitudes and assumptions built into literary conventions, and to reassess traditional ways of reading them. Genre, for instance, 'brings with it a history of reading, a set of conventions and of specifically aesthetic ideologies'. [42] Too often such issues have been left unquestioned.

In the case of Scottish fiction, in which romance and myth play an important part, there is a pressing need to re-examine romance conventions, and offer challenges to the more established ways of reading them. This means calling to question, for example, influential types of 'archetypal' criticism. Even Northrop Frye himself, the grand master of this kind of criticism has said that 'One of the things that the study of literature should do is to help the student become aware of his own mythological conditioning, especially on the more passive and critically unexamined levels'. [43]

42 Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women : Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form (Brighton and New Jersey 1982), p. 6. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

43 The Secular Scripture : A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1976), p. 167.

Particular fictions, of course, may re-work conventions, preventing any simple reading of the ideology of the work. Penny Boumelha comments that Thomas Hardy's disruption and disjunction of modes complicate his fictional representation of women. She suggests that 'the radicalism of Hardy's representation of women resides, not in their "complexity", their "realism" or their "challenge to convention", but in their resistance to reduction to a single and uniform ideological position' (p. 7). The critical analysis of an author's use of,and perhaps disruption of, conventional modes, is one useful starting place for discussion and tentative evaluation.

More traditional critics may object to a type of criticism which appears not to care about 'aesthetic' values in the accepted sense. However, feminist criticism can illuminate the links between 'ideology' and formal effect, and suggest new criteria for evaluation. The ambiguity of attitude which many male writers demonstrate towards their female characters, for instance, clearly has formal - and aesthetic - effects in the fiction,which should not be overlooked even by non-feminist critics. More problematically, the question, 'can a work of art which is anti-semitic be good art?' has been posited, [44] and similar questions relating to women and the ideology of literature are now being raised. Although there are no easy answers, such questions can surely no longer be left out of account.

44 For instance, by Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature? translated by Bernard Frechtman (London, 1950), p. 46. Originally published as Qu'est que c'est la Littérature? (Paris, 1947).

In tackling these complex issues, it is probably best to remain flexible in approach. One critic has remarked that 'When feminists (like many others) idealize a fully articulated meaningful identity, they often end by redefining "exemplary" instead of examining the idea of an exemplar'. [45] I certainly do not wish to propose that there is some 'ideal' way of representing women in fiction, or that there exists some 'ideal' female identity against which to measure and find wanting the images of women which exist. Ultimately women cannot be 'fully represented', cannot be defined. This conviction lies behind the urge to question and criticize existing 'exemplars', which can, at worst, have the effect of preventing women from realizing a full and necessarily indefinable identity of their own. As Julia Kristeva has declared:

> On a deeper level... a women cannot "be"; it is something which does not even belong in the order of <u>being</u>. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say "that's not it" and "that's still not it". In "woman" I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above nomenclatures and ideologies. [46]

Notwithstanding this inevitably 'negative' aspect of feminist criticism, it may be possible to reclaim something positive for women from the images we find in literature. Although the idea of 'character' has been radically deconstructed, [47] and the Victorian faith in 'character' can never be regained, it may be vital that we reserve the right to take from it what we can use.

45 Brownstein, p. xxv.

46 From 'Woman Can Never be Defined', translated by Marilyn August from the French of 'La femme ce n'est jamais ça', an interview with 'psychoanalysis and politics' in <u>Tel Quel</u> (Autumn 1974), in <u>New French Feminisms : An Anthology</u>, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton, 1981), pp. 137-141 (p. 137).

47 Outstandingly by some women critics such as Hélène Cixous.

Nina Auerbach has discussed the way in which Victorian critics were able to write about fictional characters as if they were actual people with lives beyond the text. Such a way of reading literature seems naïve to us now, but Auerbach points out that the Victorian association between 'character' and 'womanhood' is by no means dead. As taken up and transmuted by Virginia Woolf, for instance, it can contribute in its way to 'a corporate feminist attempt, still with us, to secrete through the generations the valuable essence of woman's usable past as a talisman against a sleekly complacent modernity that continually threatens new disenfranchisements'.[48] Auerbach goes on to remark that one fictional creation who inspired many Victorian readers and critics was Sir Walter Scott's Diana Vernon, the subject of an essay by T.E. Kebbel, for whom Diana is a fascinating and multi-faceted woman, rather than a mere fictional creation (pp. 190-1). The rich and various freedom which the Diana perceived by Kebbel enjoys is remarkable. Although Kebbel's reading tells us much about Victorian habits of mind no longer congenial to modern critics, it may be argued that the feminist critic should not turn her back on the vitality and animation of the 'Diana' of the Victorian reader. It is, of course, essential to call to question the damaging myths of womanhood and of character; but there is a need also, perhaps, for a complementary practice, which recognizes the potential power we can draw from fiction, and from fictional representations of women. As Auerbach reminds us, 'the idea of character has been part of woman's legacy as well as literature's, its very fictionality hinting of an unbounded future that includes the powers of our unregarded past' (p. 229).

48 Auerbach, p. 225. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Victorian responses to Diana Vernon are a reminder that although Scott's fictional women are today often criticized as inadequately imagined and thought-through, they are also often potentially very interesting.

Modern feminists have commented, for instance, on Scott's creation of Jeanie Deans, a character who defies the usual rules for nineteenth-century fictional womanhood.[49] The powerful, even proto-feminist dimension to some of Scott's female characters has not, however, been looked at in any great detail, although the ambiguities and contradictions which are often a feature of their presentation make this an area of considerable complexity, and one deserving attention. The following chapter will therefore examine the role of women in Scott's fiction, offering in the first few sections some rather general discussion to illustrate the critical and thematic issues which will be important in the course of this thesis; there will then follow some specific and detailed textual analysis. Scott is not only Scotland's greatest fiction writer, but also its most influential, and consideration of Scott's work is thus an essential preliminary to discussion of the work of later writers, forming the first part of what I hope will be a complex re-evaluation of Scottish fiction.

49 See, for instance, Brownstein, p. 82.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN IN SCOTT'S FICTION

I SCOTT'S WOMEN AND THE CRITICS : INADEQUACIES OF INTERPRETATION AND A WAY FORWARD

II JEANIE DEANS AS A WOMAN OF THE FOLK

III JEANIE DEANS AS A ROMANTIC SYMBOL IN A SCOTTISH CONTEXT

IV READING 'CHARACTER' IN SCOTT'S FICTION : ROMANCE, ROMANTICISM, WOMEN AND IDEOLOGY. FLORA, ROSE AND OTHER EXAMPLES

V THE EXPLOITATION OF ENCHANTMENT - MADGE WILDFIRE'S AMBIGUOUS ROLE

VI THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR : SUPERSTITION AND SYMBOLISM

VII REDGAUNTLET : 'MASCULINE' SCOTLAND

VIII ASSESSING SCOTT'S WOMEN : LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS AND IMPORTANCE FOR THE FUTURE.

I

Few critics have looked in detail at the female characters in Scott's fiction. There is, however, a growing critical industry attending to Scott, and a welcome aspect of this is that it is now possible to discuss issues that would have once seemed peripheral. The representation of women in the work of Scott is a subject of intrinsic interest, but the study of this topic can shed useful light on later Scottish fiction; and it also raises important questions about ways of reading 'character' in fiction which are of general relevance.

All too often the female characters in Scott's fiction have been ignored or discussed only briefly in reductive language. In many cases, of course, the critic merely reveals his own biases. (It is hardly coincidental that most Scott criticism, with only a few exceptions, has been produced by men.) In discussing Scott's representation of women there has been a tendency to focus on the much-criticized vapid heroines, with little attention to the many powerful and often disturbing female characters present often a little off-centre: Madge Wildfire, Lady Ashton, Helen MacGregor, Mause Headrigg. Such characters, not being conventional heroines, do not seem to fit into the existing critical scheme. Even a female critic, Claire Lamont, shows a singular lack of curiosity when she describes Lady Ashton from The Bride of Lammermoor in passing as 'that masculine woman'.[1] It is a suggestive remark, but one which she unfortunately does not pursue.

1 'Scott as Story-teller: The Bride of Lammermoor', in Scottish Literary Journal, 7, 1, (May 1980), 113-126 (p. 120).

Yet perhaps such a lack of curiosity is less damaging than the superficial lip-service given by many critics to some of the 'heroines'. Diana Vernon draws forth some very telling responses from modern commentators. According to one critic, 'in a superficial sense she is perfectly life-like, saucy and high-spirited'. [2] However, he goes on, 'in terms of the deeper artistic purpose for which Flora MacIvor has her being, she simply does not exist'. (p. 155). These points are extended to include some other female characters:

> It is often said that Scott's heroines are uninteresting and are just part of the machinery of his books. As a generalization this has enough rough justice to be accepted. But Diana Vernon really stands in a separate, intermediate position. A heroine like Edith Bellenden in Old Mortality has little relation to the book's central concerns. Flora MacIvor is an essential part of Waverley's whole structure. But Diana Vernon is a perfectly respectable day-dream of the not impossible she. (p. 155)

There appears to be some confusion here. Having said that Scott's heroines are often just 'part of the machinery', it seems contradictory to deny them any relation to the 'central concerns' of the novels. It would be one thing to deny their verisimilitude, or to deny their lack of 'depth' (many of them do lack depth in the traditionally accepted novelistic sense); but to separate them out from the 'concerns' of the novels without offering any evidence as to what those are, is wilful. Clearly Cockshut is trying to tackle a real issue here; but these remarks are frustratingly muddled.

2 A.O.J. Cockshut, The Achievement of Walter Scott (London, 1969), p. 155. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Another critic, Robert C. Gordon, is still more dismissive of Scott's women. He welcomes Diana Vernon as 'an exhilarating change from Scott's previous polite heroines', [3] and commends the 'sheer novelty of the character' (p. 81). However, thereafter, Diana is damned:

> Nevertheless Francis Jeffrey may have hit the mark when he called Diana "rather a more violent fiction... than a king with marble legs". The trouble is that Die is simply too much - a devout Catholic, a self-sacrificing daughter, an active Jacobite, an ambitious bluestocking, a transvestite, a huntress, a romantic social critic - an amalgam, in short, of Flora MacIvor, Mary Wortley Montagu, and Buffalo Bill. Perhaps because there is so much in her requiring expression, her volubility is overwhelming. It is also hyper-masculine. Andrew Lang, one of her warmest admirers, found her "loving and...light of heart" and likened her to Rosalind. What, then, are we to make of the following? (p. 81).

Gordon goes on to quote a piece of turgid and convoluted prose which has been put into the mouth of the unfortunate Diana. It is indeed unbelievable as a piece of dialogue. However, Gordon's acumen in spotting this chunk of unlikely verbosity does not excuse the tone or confusion of his criticism of Diana. Why is she "too much"? It might be said she is not 'credible' as a woman of her time, but this is a criticism to some extent anticipated and answered by the character herself: "You think me a strange bold girl, half coquette, half romp; desirous of attracting attention by the freedom of her manners and loudness of her conversation, because she is ignorant of what the 'Spectator' calls the softer graces of the sex". [4] Her volubility, she explains, is a response to her isolation. Naturally communicative, she relishes an outlet seldom afforded her.

3 Under Which King? A Study of the Scottish Waverley Novels (Edinburgh and London, 1969), p. 81. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

4 Rob Roy, I, p. 74. All references to the Waverley novels are to the Border Edition, 48 vols (London 1892-4).

The criticism that she is an unlikely character is further weakened by the actual existence in her time of articulate, intellectual women, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, whose actual life would probably seem 'too much' to Gordon.

Gordon describes Diana's verbosity as 'hyper-masculine'; however he does not explain why. Perhaps he means that the heavy prose put into her mouth is 'masculine' - but in what way? Is it, indeed, 'masculine' of her to talk at all? Presumably Gordon does not condemn masculinity, but he does apparently object to it in Diana. Gordon's remarks are very obviously sexist; but they are also very distortive. He ignores and misrepresents aspects of Diana's role in the novel. Describing her, for instance, as a 'transvestite' is clearly absurd. One does not normally describe Shakespeare's heroines as 'transvestites', although they often dress as men. In the course of Scott's fiction there are a number of incidents involving characters dressed as the opposite sex; Darsie Latimer dressed as a woman in Redgauntlet, for example. It would be helpful to analyze such incidents, rather than jokingly dismissing them, for they are part of an important and often ignored deep 'theme' or meaning in the fiction.

The 'meaningfulness' of Diana's character would emerge if a more constructive approach were taken. Diana's name should alert us to her partly symbolic function: the goddess Diana was a huntress, and when we first encounter Diana Vernon, she is out on the hunt. She appears like a goddess to the impressionable Frank (whose name may also be significant). This may seem obvious, but would not appear to be so to Robert C. Gordon, who sees Diana's riding activities

in terms of Buffalo Bill.

I have discussed Gordon's commentary on Diana Vernon at some length because it illustrates an unpleasant bias in modern Scott criticism. We surely need a counterbalance to such remarks as these, not merely because they are insulting, but because they are superficial, overlooking certain important aspects of Scott's fiction which should be seriously considered. However, a number of critics have shown a refreshing willingness to talk about the role of women in Scott's fiction, and have related this to the larger structure of his work. Thomas Crawford, particularly, looks at issues often ignored by critics, and makes some important points. Crawford says of Scott's fictional women:

> Scott's treatment of his women characters cuts right across the divisions between "principal" and comic characters, or between upper class and lower class. There is no evidence that Scott, so much at home in a drawing room and so affectionately deferential towards grandes dames like Lady Abercorn, was in the least concerned, intellectually speaking, with the problem of the subjection of women, or that he was distressed that the women of his own class were not assigned a more active role in the society of his day. But the fact remains that the type of novel he chose to write - the adventurous novel of action; and the type of tradition in which he felt most at home - the tradition of folk and popular art - inevitably forced him to place his womenfolk in situations of danger, or circumstances where they could aid their lovers by bold and resolute action. His plots and his reading public alike demanded that his heroines should be faced with a certain type of decision; and the attempt to give them psychological verisimilitude within that framework inevitably led him to portray, not the drawing-room ladies of Jane Austen or the husband-hunting social climbers of Richardson, but women who, morally speaking, ought to be free, and who, in the exceptional circumstances of the novels, act for one or two brief moments like the women of the future. [5]

5 Scott (Edinburgh 1982), p. 77. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Crawford raises many vital points here. As he points out (p. 77), there are two different kinds of 'heroine' in Scott's fiction: 'passive' heroines, in the drawing-room mould, but also strong, assertive women, often the first to attract the hero. Of course, it is likely that Scott's fictional women to some extent draw breath from his own (romantic) experience, but the significance of this can be overemphasized, and it seems more important to look, as Crawford suggests, at the broader issues of class, and the importance in Scott's fiction of the folk and popular traditions. The 'folk' women are, as Crawford observes, usually much more interesting and convincing than the genteel lady heroines (pp. 79-80). Some of Crawford's other points also bear further discussion. He draws attention to Scott's 'masculine' women, noting the frequency with which the adjective 'masculine' recurs (p. 79). He also alludes to the function of 'character symbolism', suggesting the value of ways of reading character other than looking simply for 'convincing' or 'recognizable' characterization (p. 80).

I would like to take up these points and relate them to a number of Scott's novels, and especially to one of his greatest and most important works, The Heart of Midlothian, which is outstandingly interesting for its representation of women, and which contains themes and symbols that recur in later Scottish fiction as well. A thematic approach to Scott's fiction undertaken by Lars Hartveit suggests it may be fruitful to look at certain recurring topics or ideas which appear in the novels.[6] I would not argue, as does

6 Dream Within a Dream : A Thematic Approach to Scott's Vision of Fictional Reality (Oslo and New York, 1974). See pp. 20-21.

Robin Mayhead, that we should look for 'thematic unity', [7] for of course the idea of 'unity' as a critical criterion is now being seriously questioned; but it may be valuable to focus on certain important aspects of the fiction which are of persistent significance in Scottish fiction. I will therefore take up Crawford's point about the significance of class and folk culture, and add to this another important feature of the fiction: religious concerns, which I will introduce only briefly here and develop in a subsequent chapter. These central ideas are tied up with the whole issue of characterization, and I would like to pursue Crawford's hint that there are a number of ways of approaching this. I will particularly consider the symbolic roles assigned to women in fiction which uses romance forms and displays Romantic themes.

II

Firstly, there is the importance of 'the folk' in Scott's fiction. Georg Lukács observed that Scott 'created his greatest female character in the figure of the Puritan peasant girl, Jeanie Deans'. [8] Although not a peasant himself, Scott sympathetically (if at times, condescendingly) presents Jeanie as the central figure in The Heart of Midlothian. Certainly, Jeanie is something of an exception in Scott's fiction, in that she is the only peasant character in the major novels to hold centre-stage. She is not, therefore, exactly 'representative'; but she is significant, by virtue of her very unusualness, especially when seen

7 'The Heart of Midlothian: Scott as Artist', Essays in Criticism, 6, 3 (1956), 266-277 (p. 266).

8 The Historical Novel, translated from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London, 1962), p. 52. First published, in Russian, 1937.

in the nineteenth-century context, and because of the power she has exerted over the imaginations of readers and other writers.

As a peasant girl, Jeanie is less constrained by genteel ways than many fictional heroines, and can undertake her journey to London and behave more freely in general, without censure either from her society or from her author.

> A visit to a lover from a young person in a higher rank of life than Jeanie's, would have had something forward and improper in its character. But the simplicity of her rural habits was unacquainted with these punctilious ideas of decorum, and no notion, therefore, of impropriety crossed her imagination, as, setting out upon a long journey, she went to bid adieu to an early friend. (The Heart of Midlothian, II, p. 31).

In Tom Jones, we could not imagine Sophia Western undertaking any perilous trips on foot, or exhibiting such frank behaviour; but Tom's rural mistresses are in this sense considerably more free. We find few such 'free' heroines in nineteenth-century fiction. It is interesting that in Wuthering Heights, the dual pressures on Cathy Earnshaw are what destroy her. Brought up to run about freely in the company of the gypsy Heathcliff she is also attracted as time goes by to a more decorous life and love. Although Cathy is no peasant, she is one of the few fictional heroines of her time permitted to experience the unrestrained life; and she pays for it.

In Scotland, however, the strong native folk tradition plays a significant part in the literature, allowing the creation of a character such as Jeanie. In a country which has a powerful ballad and song tradition, it is significant that the greatest national poet was a 'man of the people', who was himself drawing on older oral and traditional sources. Many of Burns's songs have female

personae, perhaps because some of the originals were created by women. Thomas Crawford comments that the songs were probably created by a man, but that 'if the persona is not so much a real girl as the projection of a male wish-fulfillment dream, her very existence indicates that some Scotsmen had an ideal of active womanhood that was poles apart from the pale lilies of polite society... In many a folk-song this ideal takes on flesh and blood to become a sexually proud and independent heroine of everyday life'.[9] Critics seem reluctant to face the idea that proud and sexual women could actually exist; but whatever the origin of such women, they are strikingly present in Scottish song culture. Crawford comments that the independent woman is not only found in Scotland, she is also English and Irish: 'the really distinguishing thing about her is that she is a woman of the people'.[10] The Scottish woman of the people is, however, notably present in Scottish fiction of the nineteenth century.

Jeanie Deans is strong and independent, but she is not outstandingly sexual. Scott did not write in the bawdy tradition favoured by the more sexually explicit Burns. For a fictional equivalent of Burns's women, we would need to look at Galt's The Last of the Lairds, and some of Hogg's fiction. Jeanie has her charms, however, appealing both to Reuben and Dumbiedykes; and occasionally we may be surprised by a minor character in a Scott novel. There is a tough blacksmith's wife in Waverley, for instance:

9 Society and the Lyric : a study of the Song Culture of eighteenth-century Scotland (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 23.

10 Society and the Lyric, p. 25.

> Gae hame, gudewife," quoth the farmer aforesaid;" it wad better set you to be nursing the gudeman's bairns than to be deaving us here." "His bairns?" retorted the Amazon, regarding her husband with a grin of ineffable contempt, - His bairns!
>
> 'O gin ye were dead, gudeman,
> And a green turf on your head, gudeman!
> Then I wad ware my widowhood
> Upon a ranting Highlandman '"(II, pp. 6-7).

A number of other strong female peasant characters, such as Jenny Dennison in Old Mortality, are impressive for their forthrightness and resilience. The sexual vitality of the rural heroine is important in later Scottish fiction, too, symbolically representing the forces of life repressed by strict Calvinism, moderate gentility, and middle-class life. A distinction has to be made however, between the 'realistic' aspect of 'folk' characters, and a tendency to pastoralize, to idealize and to romanticize.

III

The idealization of the peasant in Scotland has a variety of sources. Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who focused on the nature of society, such as Hume, Ferguson, Millar and others, stressed the notion of development, of progress through different stages, from 'barbarism', through the savage or primitive, to 'civilization'. Even in the early stages, however, there was an ambiguity surrounding these concepts. Romanticism decisively reversed the idea of 'progress', and the 'noble savage' became a significant figure. Romantic writers were very much preoccupied with a somewhat idealized notion of the peasant, Wordsworth's noble peasantry being the most notable of the English Romantic movement. The opposition between the peasant and the 'genteel', between the 'natural' and the 'sophisticated' were significant features of European Romanticism.

In Scotland, however, it may be suggested that 'concern with the Union may have given a political referent to these emergent literary dualities that might, as Daiches argues, have given an energy to their expression in a Scottish context that was lacking elsewhere'. [11] The noble savage had gradually come to represent for Europeans 'a lost innocence and simplicity of life governed by a natural ethic which was even believed to be somehow superior to Christianity. The Christian lived forever under the eternal burden of Original Sin - but from this the Noble Savage was entirely free'. [12] The political situation of Scotland probably contributed to the appearance of the idealized Scottish peasant as a recurrent figure, but it is also likely that in Scotland, a nation dominated by Calvinism, with its extreme emphasis on 'Original Sin', the figure of the noble savage could become a particularly significant symbol of freedom and moral superiority.

It might be suggested that Jeanie, for all her down to earth character, symbolically represents some Romantic ideals. Both as peasant and woman, Jeanie represents certain ideals put forward by Rousseau. Scott was certainly not consciously a Rousseauist, quite the contrary; but while he may have feared the revolutionary threat posed by modern industrial society, he offers a critique of society and its restrictiveness and injustice which may be compared with:

11 Malcolm Chapman, The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture (London and Montreal, 1978), pp. 31-2.

12 Margaret Mary Rubel, Savage and Barbarian: Historical Attitudes in the Criticism of Homer and Ossian in Britain, 1760-1800 (Amsterdam, Oxford and New York, 1978), p. 12.

> Rousseau's ideas of a state of nature where man was in harmony with the physical world had important liberatory implications. From this revolutionaries could oppose feeling and sensibility to authority and custom, argue for elements based on individual sex love, and support human potential against the crushing mechanical wheels of existing social institutions. [13]

Jeanie in certain obvious ways represents 'human potential' and other such ideals; drawing perhaps also on the native tradition of sentimentality, Scott makes his heroine combine the virtues of the 'noble savage' with the natural virtues attributed also to women by Romantic ideology (often ambiguously, although here apparently without reserve). [14] Jeanie's behaviour is an implicit criticism of the society in which she lives, and of the unjust law which condemns Effie.

Jeanie has principles, but she is associated with feeling, as opposed to the abstract rigidity of the law, which claiming to be rational and objective, is clearly unjust and inhumane. The 'heart' of the title refers to the prison, which is of course paradoxically so named; the true 'heart' of the novel is Jeanie's heart, a human heart, wherein justice is tested and found wanting. Jeanie also stands for the right of the individual in an authoritarian society; the individual heart, and perhaps, too, the shrewd peasant individuality later represented in Chris Guthrie and Gunn's Dark Mairi.

Jeanie's female compassion challenges the dominant values of an essentially male society. The perpetrators of oppression, the law, Staunton, Davie Deans, are all men. They are not all strong,

13 Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (London, 1972), p. 38.

14 See Rowbotham, p. 38.

however; Alexander Welsh has pointed out that in contrast to Jeanie's 'masculine' robustness, the men are sickly. [15] Reuben Butler is weak, and Staunton is first identified properly when Jeanie finds him on his sickbed. This repressive male society is, in a sense, diseased. It is Jeanie, a woman, who sets out to save Effie, and Queen Caroline, another woman, who finally grants the pardon. This might suggest that Scott is positing an image of feminine grace or mercy (Madge calls herself Mercy at one point) which leavens the male repressiveness, a repressiveness which particularly affects women, such as Effie and Madge. Yet while Jeanie shows true human compassion, she is herself strong, and in this she is an interesting nineteenth-century female character.

Jeanie is not an abstracted Rousseauist symbolic ideal of peasant and woman, however: she is specifically Scottish. Robin Mayhead has argued that 'Scott's primary concern in this novel is the nature of justice as it is in any age. The historical setting has its own interest but the central question would be the same whatever the period and whatever the particular manifestation of justice chosen'. [16] Mayhead is right insofar as the novel has a 'universal' value and power of reference. However, we cannot merely divorce 'meaning' from plot, setting and characters, and these are situated in Scotland. The law which condemns Effie is a Scottish law, and it is significant that Scotland is under English domination. It is also important that the father who disowns Effie is a Scottish Presbyterian with a particular set of principles.

15 The Hero of the Waverley Novels (New Haven and London, 1963), pp. 146-7.

16 'The Heart of Midlothian: Scott as Artist', p. 277.

This religious aspect of the novel has been seen by some critics as one of the most important. David Craig argues that Presbyterianism is at the very centre of the novel.[17] The Deans family are one of the few lower-class families to achieve centrality in a Scott novel, and the link between Scottish Presbyterianism and populist democracy should not be forgotten. However, while Scott thus gives a certain status to a social group usually more peripheral in his fiction, the novel also offers a critique of Scottish Presbyterianism. The central disaster of the Deans family, Effie's fall, and the subsequent events, are partly attributable to the unbending attitudes of Davie Deans. His Calvinist principles have hardened in time into authoritarianism and intolerance, and it is the woman who suffers most as a result. Craig comments that 'Effie is as much a natural, feminine reaction to severity and sobriety as Jeanie is its dutiful product and Davie its enforcer with the inevitable limitations of humane understanding' (p. 168).

Of course, Craig's remark raises serious problems, begging the question, 'What is a "natural, feminine reaction"?' It is unwise to assume that any such thing exists. However, clearly Effie represents a delight in life that is not tolerated by the more extreme Presbyterian Davie, who is severely disturbed by her sexuality and lack of moral discipline. Scott seems to present a polarization of male repressiveness and female 'freedom' in these two figures, although his attitudes are by no means clear-cut. Craig's reading of Jeanie's part in the novel I find more difficult to accept.

17 Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London, 1961), p. 167. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Certainly, Jeanie is not a conspicuously sexual woman, being of stolid rather than passionate disposition. Presbyterians in Scott's novels are often passionate in their commitment to their religion, as is Mause Headrigg in Old Mortality, but potentially sexual women are generally Catholic, like Diana Vernon, or perhaps Jewish, as is Rebecca in Ivanhoe. Nevertheless, Jeanie is not, I suggest, merely 'dutiful', for she sets out to save her sister. Jeanie appears to represent values which combine the strong sense of principle that is, perhaps, the better part of her religion, with a deep humanity: she is shown to be generous in her dealings with Madge Wildfire and the Whistler, as well as with her own sister. Just as there is an implicit contrast between Davie and Effie, so there is a contrast between Davie and Jeanie, who challenges the repressiveness of the male - as she had challenged 'male' justice - to become a Romantic symbol of individual justice and compassion. The fact that a female becomes such a symbol in a Scottish context is not insignificant, for in much later Scottish fiction the woman is still to be found representing humane values which are too often repressed by a dominant Presbyterian - and male - society.

IV

If in some ways Jeanie is a Romantic figure, symbolizing certain qualities and values held important by Romantic writers, then it is possible that, as Thomas Crawford suggests, we need to find different and appropriate ways of 'reading' character in works such as Scott's, in which characters are not necessarily or conventionally 'realistic'. Crawford suggests that the characters in The Heart of Midlothian by and large 'fall into three quite different categories-types, symbolic characters and Jonsonian "humour" characters'.[18]

18 Scott, p. 100.

Although Crawford argues that Scott is more interested in human psychology than is sometimes suggested, his fictional characters may be best approached in a number of different ways, depending on their function in the novel.

The Romantic aspect of Scott's fiction has been rather neglected by recent critics. While most critics discuss Scott in terms of a fusion of 'romance' and 'realism', there has been a recent tendency to play down Scott's Romanticism. There has been much interest in Scott's handling of history, in the wake of Lukác's influential work; and while Lukác's discussion of Jeanie Deans as a heroic popular figure is obviously very important, and relevant to any discussion of the representation of women in Scott's novels, the notion of historical 'truth' generally is a limited one which has detracted from other aspects of Scott's work.

It is understandable that modern critics should wish to rehabilitate Scott, who has become somewhat unfashionable. A good number of scholarly books and articles now indicate Scott's links with his intellectual environment, thus illustrating his 'respectability' for scholars, who set him in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment.[19] However, while it is right that Scott should no longer be regarded merely as a spinner of yarns suitable for schoolchildren, the Romantic dimension of his work is now in danger of being ignored. The eminent critic Northrop Frye remarks that his interest in Scott was reawakened when he recognized that Scott could be most sympathetically read in

19 For instance, P.D. Garside, 'Scott the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century', The Review of English Studies, 23, 90 (1972), 147-161; Andrew D. Hook, 'The Bride of Lammermoor: A Re-examination', in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 22, 2 (1967), 111-126; Graham McMaster, Scott and Society (Cambridge, 1981).

the light of romance; [20] and readings of Scott's fiction which focus on this aspect of his work may provide new, illuminating insights.

Certain Romantic themes are embodied in characters such as Jeanie; but it is necessary to look also at the more formal aspects of 'Romanticism'. Romanticism is a relatively modern term, related to an older idea, romance, which is characterized by certain structures and forms. The critic Daniel Cottom has argued that in 'ignoring the structural relationships and organisation in Scott's writing', [21] the modern critic of Scott overlooks much that importantly contradicts the standard view of his work. The structural relationships of Scott's work cannot be fully divorced from the ideas and ideology of the novels, or indeed their historical context. The romance structures which recur in Scott's fiction may have been encouraged by his contemporary intellectual environment. Graham McMaster, for instance, points out that when Scott insists that 'man is always moved by the same springs', he is uttering ideas common to the Scottish School of Philosophy; [22] at the same time, this is the kind of 'universalist' vision which would readily lie behind the use of romance forms.

Despite the obvious importance of such connections, few critics have offered questioning analyses of Scott's use of romance. Some have, of course, discussed Scott's use of romance conventions.

20 The Secular Scripture : A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1978), pp. 5-6.

21 Daniel Cottom, 'The Waverley Novels: Superstition and the Enchanted Reader' in ELH, 47 (1980), 80-102 (p. 96).

22 Scott and Society, pp. 55-59 (p. 56).

Alexander Welsh, notably, has offered extensive discussion of the romance form, and Scott's use of it.[23] Welsh's book is valuable but often oversimplifies issues or leaves important areas unquestioned. He discusses the various aspects of romance, for instance, commenting that the moral aim of romance entails the depiction of 'truth' through an idealized image, and he suggests: 'The idealized image of truth in the Waverley novels was fundamentally uncritical. Scott undertook his romance with no satirical or ironic intent. Nor did he strive to render an image of truth that would transform his society in any way' (p. 24). This seems unfair to Scott. Jeanie Deans herself is an implicit criticism of simplified ideas of 'truth', and neither The Heart of Midlothian, nor The Bride of Lammermoor, can be described as 'uncritical' of society. Scott is at once more critical of society, more 'revolutionary' than Welsh allows, and yet also in some ways more conservative. Welsh's discussion of romance conventions fails to explore in any challenging way the ideological aspect of the form as used by Scott. The ideological implications of the use of romance are very important for the representation of women; and it is necessary to develop a critical approach which comes to grips with this.

Northrop Frye's definitions of romance are a valuable starting place for such a discussion. The characteristic form of the romance is naturally 'sequential and processional',[24] and this usually involves a quest. The protagonist of the quest is the hero; according to Frye, 'The central form of romance is dialectical:

23 Welsh, pp. 1-18. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

24 Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, New Jersey, 1973), p. 186. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

everything is focussed on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero' (p. 187). The hero's moral quest is often not merely that of an individual, but is a quest to free or purge a whole society. Typically, the characters in romance are not complex; 'character' in the more modern novelistic sense is less important than 'role'. Frye does offer some analysis of the 'ideology' of romance:

> The romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy...Yet there is a genuinely "proletarian" element in romance too which is never satisfied with its various incarnations, and in fact the incarnations themselves indicate that no matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on. The perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia. (p. 186).

Although romance is rooted in the 'ruling class', then, it has revolutionary potential. This is illustrated in The Heart of Midlothian, in which a Scottish peasant is given the central position. However, what is the woman's role in all this? It would appear to be a secondary and symbolic one. Frye points out that 'the reward of the quest usually is, or includes a bride' (p. 193). We have such female characters in romance, therefore, as the 'potential bride like Solveig in Peer Gynt, who sits quietly at home waiting for the hero to finish his wanderings and come back to her. This latter figure is often the lady for whose sake or at whose bidding the quest is performed' (p. 195). There is another female figure, the 'lady of pleasure', who tempts the hero away from his 'true' path, and 'a polarization may thus be set up between the lady of duty and the lady of pleasure' (p. 196).

If we apply such definitions to Scott's fiction, we find that they are clearly inadequate. Jeanie Deans can hardly be fitted into this definition of the female role. Jeanie is not the typical heroine of romance, but the hero. Her journey is the central quest of the plot, and the reader's values are bound up with her on her quest which is not only personal, but concerned with the health and sanity of her society. Reuben Butler plays the part more conventionally assigned to the 'heroine', as he waits passively at home for her to return to him. Seen in this way, The Heart of Midlothian uses convention in an exciting and innovative way. This also suggests, however, that we need to reassess critical terminology. Feminists are already doing this. Some female critics have suggested that we need a comprehensive typology of female portraits, similar to existing myth criticism, but which, they suggest, calls to question conventional ways of describing female roles. [25] Feminist critics are now working on theories of 'female heroism', offering a corrective to the existing, inadequate terminology. [26]

It would seem in relation to this that finer distinctions could usefully be made between Scott's use of romance as a form, and his Romanticism. Alexander Welsh, for example, has stated:

25 Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, Who am I this Time? Female Portraits in British and American Literature. (New York, etc. 1976), p. 2. They allude to Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism and Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

26 See for instance Ellen Moers, Literary Women (London, 1977), especially Part II, 'Heroinism'. See also Lee R. Edwards, 'The Labors of Psyche: Toward a Theory of Female Heroism', in Critical Inquiry, 6, 1 (1979), 33-49.

> Although Scott protests that Jeanie Deans "was no heroine of romance" (Ch. 26), he contends that "there was something of romance in Jeanie's venturous resolution" to walk to London (Ch. 27). In what sense is this journey romantic? In the first place, it is generous as well as venturous. Jeanie's emotion prompts her to undertake this pilgrimage, and to save her sister she relies on moving the compassion of Queen Caroline. In this she succeeds...In the second place, her recourse lies essentially outside the law, though technically within it. [27]

Jeanie certainly is, in the sense taken by Welsh here, a Romantic figure. However, Scott's statement that Jeanie was 'no heroine of romance', is, in a technical sense, accurate, and should also be noted.

Welsh seems confused about the roles of women in other novels by Scott too. In his discussion of the 'two heroines' of romance in Scott's fiction, he comments, 'The brunette is the more literary being of the two - since the blonde stands for the real, the possible, the morally tenable relationship with women. If not from dreams, the more impossible brunette is derived from books' (p. 81). This is highly questionable. Welsh seems here to have internalized Scott's romance values rather than analyzing them. Certainly, in Scott's value system, in Waverley for instance, the blonde Rose Bradwardine is the 'morally tenable', the acceptable female, whom Waverley should marry. Perhaps she is also based on Scott's observation of polite society ladies. However, Rose is not, I suggest, any more 'realistic' than Flora MacIvor; she plays, indeed, the part of a conventional romance heroine, like Solveig, and is thus just as 'literary' as Flora.

27 Welsh, p. 131. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Welsh produces as evidence that Flora and her like are purely 'literary' the existence of parody, and he quotes from Peacock's Nightmare Abbey(p. 81). The fictional Romantic heroine may have become a stock literary figure of the time, but the parody does not in itself disprove the existence of a certain kind of woman; indeed the parodist could have had in mind a real woman such as Mary Wollstonecraft. The parody may illustrate merely the prejudices of the writer. It is interesting, moreover, that once again the male critic seems unwilling to confront the possibility that a passionate woman, politically committed and intelligent, could actually exist.

Some critics are more prepared to take Flora seriously. Thomas Crawford sees in Flora both the literary convention which demarcates her role, and her more interesting political aspect: 'Flora MacIvor is at one and the same time the female political idealist... and the dark-haired and dark-eyed beauty of romance, while Rose Bradwardine is the blonde chocolate-box princess of a thousand northern tales'. [28] Crawford recognizes the essentially conventional nature of Rose, but sees in Flora a more complex creation altogether.

Flora clearly is in some ways the 'dark heroine' of romance, but we should be alert to the degree of self-consciousness with which Scott endows her, and the complexity of his presentation of her. Welsh remarks that 'the blonde and the brunette rival each other for the affections of the passive hero', [29] but in Waverley this is not strictly true. Flora is never romantically interested in

28 Scott , p. 78.

29 Welsh, p. 72.

Waverley, as she makes clear:'"For myself, from my infancy till this day, I have had but one wish - the restoration of my royal benefactors to their rightful throne. It is impossible to express to you the devotion of my feelings to this single subject; and I will frankly confess that it has so occupied my mind as to exclude every thought respecting what is called my own settlement in life"' (I, p. 256). Flora understands Waverley better than he does himself, and sees that although he is attracted to her, Rose is the 'right' woman for him.

The scene where Waverley watches Flora playing her harp is interesting, because although she is seated picturesquely on a hillside playing an instrument that is not only representative of the Scottish Highlands, but much beloved, symbolically, of the Romantic poets, Flora herself is entirely aware of the effect she is having on Waverley: 'But as she possessed excellent sense, she gave the romance of the scene, and other accidental circumstances, full weight in appreciating the feelings with which Waverley seemed obviously to be impressed' (I, p. 204). Flora's magical aura is shown to be at least partly in Waverley's own mind; she is actually an intelligent and independent woman and no mere Romantic image. Flora's self-consciousness and desire to pursue her own quest mark her out from the somewhat one-dimensional symbolic heroine of romance.

Notwithstanding her unusual political zeal, and resounding common-sense, however, Flora is clearly in many ways an idealized figure. Compared to her brother Fergus, she is a veritable paragon. She is idealistic but moral, possessed of beauty, integrity and compassion. Scott, in true chivalrous fashion, is unwilling to

attribute to the woman the baser instincts which he indicates are present in the male. As Alexander Welsh rather infelicitously puts it, unlike the dark hero,'"the female of the species...." enjoys a certain immunity from criticism'. [30]

However, Flora is not allowed to survive. Admittedly her fate is less drastic than her brother's: whereas Fergus is killed off, Scott chivalrously spares his female idealist who is sent off instead to a French convent. But she is removed from the novel, sent off to repent of her ways, and the combination of Flora's essential goodness, and Scott's rejection of her is interesting, giving her a certain status which is paralleled, more extremely, by that of Rebecca in Ivanhoe. Rebecca, perhaps the most famous of Scott's dark passionate women, exhibits high moral fervour, and her powers of healing bring her under suspicion of sorcery. Northrop Frye has noted that her suffering, combined with her goodness, makes her a kind of redemptive symbolic figure:

> With the rise of the romantic ethos, heroism comes increasingly to be thought of in terms of suffering, endurance, and patience , which can co-exist with such weakness, whatever other kinds of strengths it may require. This is also the ethos of the Christian myth, where the heroism of Christ takes the form of enduring the Passion. Such a change in the conception of heroism largely accounts for the prominence of female figures in romance. But, as secular literature is not bound by any doctrinal inhibitions, the romantic heroine can take on a redemptive role as well, like her divine counterpart in the Christian story. [31]

Frye's observations suggest an interesting if disturbing possibility: the Romantic heroine, unable because of what may be described as society's perversion to fulfill herself or lead a life free from persecution, is made symbolic of human dignity in

30 Welsh, p. 70

31 The Secular Scripture, p. 88.

suffering. The depiction of idealized female suffering is assimilated to an ideology; and Romanticism thus appears to endorse female oppression despite apparently criticizing it. Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss protests against the way in which Scott's dark heroines are sacrificed:

> "I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. I should begin to have a prejudice against them. If you could give me some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance. I want to avenge Rebecca and Flora MacIvor, and Minna and all the rest of the dark unhappy ones". [32]

Significantly, Maggie Tulliver herself is not allowed to triumph, despite the relative success and happiness of her creator. The power of romance structures in the literary imagination of both men and women has been all too persistent.

Flora, of course, is sent off to France because she is too much of a threat to the(male)moral order; France is a symbolically appropriate place for her, the convent being merely a way of containing her nature, which is passionate and disruptive. Her fate is therefore proscribed partly by her role as the distracting dark woman in a romance structure. However, Scott is far from innocent in his adoption of the romance mode, and his assigning of roles. The romance convention is a convenient one, but Scott also shows a self-conscious awareness of its limitations and of its latent ideological content:

32 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, 3 vols (Edinburgh and London, 1860), II, p. 266.

> ...if I had rather chosen to call my work a "Sentimental Tale," would it not have been a sufficient presage of a heroine with a profusion of auburn hair, and a harp, the soft solace of her solitary hours, which she fortunately finds always the means of transporting from castle to cottage, although she herself be sometimes obliged to jump out of a two- pair- of- stairs window, and is more than once bewildered on her journey, alone and on foot, without any guide but a blowzy peasant girl whose jargon she hardly can understand? (Waverley, I, p. 3)

There is something unpleasantly cynical in this, coming from an author who is about to present us with a heroine very much fitting the description given. Flora is apparently presented to us in the novel for admiration, despite her political views. Scott seems to view her with less irony than he does Waverley, and allows her to be an intelligent and self-aware woman; but here he appears to be saying that there is a much less appealing reality behind the images which he is about to present to us. Although this tale to which he alludes here is not the one ostensibly related in the novel, the similarities of characters and scene are too striking to be written-off. Scott undercuts his own idealization of Flora, drawing attention to her aristocratic origins, and suggesting that these cut her off from the Scottish peasantry, on whom she depends; yet there is a patronizing note in that word 'blowzy', too. Scott shows his own distance from his subject matter in this very significant passage.

Scott's attitude to Flora is closely related to his attitude to Scotland. Flora's identity as a heroine of romance, and as a Romantic heroine, is linked to her identity as a symbol of Scotland and especially the Scottish Highlands. Scott is pragmatically aware that romance, and especially a romance set in the Highlands, has commercial potential:

> I was...so far discouraged by the indifferent reception of Mrs Strutt's romance, as to become satisfied that the manners of the Middle Ages did not possess the interest which I had conceived, and was led to form the opinion that a romance, founded on a Highland story and more modern events, would have a better chance of popularity than a tale of chivalry. (Waverley, I, pp. xxiii-xxiv)

Scotland, having a near-exotic fascination for an English (and indeed international) audience, is deliberately chosen for its appeal. However, Scott must make it accessible for his readers: 'The public clearly wanted heroics and romance, but they also wanted a means of identifying with the novel's content. Scott's ordinary unheroic heroes led his readers into an area of heroic action and picturesque location'.[33] Waverley is created as a means of allowing the reader to enter the exciting world of romance, but also of permitting a return to Anglo-Saxon security.

Rose and Flora, as the two heroines encountered by Waverley on his sojourn in Scotland, represent the alternative moral codes symbolically open to him; but they also represent political alternatives. Flora is the Jacobite Highlander identified with the world of romance, while Rose represents the reasonable unionist solution, as her anglicized name suggests.[34] Flora must be rejected in favour of Rose because she is distracting and dangerous, and also, most significantly, because she threatens political orthodoxy. Scott's political vision is suggested when he says:

33 Angus and Jenni Calder, Scott (London, 1969), p. 68. See also Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore and London, 1974), especially Chapter 4, 'Fiction - The Filter of History: A Study of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley', pp. 81-100.

34 It might be suggested that the rose is a flower tamed by civilization, while 'flora', the Latin word for flower, may imply a wilder kind of natural growth.

'Some favourable opportunities of contrast have been afforded me by the state of society in the northern part of the island at the period of my history, and may serve at once to vary and to illustrate the moral lessons which I would willingly consider as the most important part of my plan' (Waverley, I, p. 6). The phrase 'northern part of the island' suggests the message of Waverley to be unionist, and this is indeed imaged forth in the novel by the 'inevitable' defeat of Flora and Fergus.

Yet, while Flora must be rejected in favour of the politically acceptable Rose, what she stands for is ambiguously appealing to Scott. The idealism of the Highland Jacobite is disruptive and dangerous, but paradoxically attractive. One critic has commented: 'For an advocate of prudence and moderation, Scott had deeply martial, if not downright violent, impulses...Obsessed with violence, both repelled and attracted by it, Scott projected this obsession onto the Highlanders of his fiction'. [35] This was not a unique attitude for his time; an interest in the 'primitive' and the 'savage' amongst Scottish Enlightenment intellectuals and Romantic thinkers meant that the Scottish Gael was an object of interest, seen as epitomising the qualities of the 'primitive', both bad and good. [36] Many of these more dangerous 'primitive' qualities are of course embodied in Fergus MacIvor.

But the female Highlander is, even today, still more open to metaphorical take-over than her male counterpart, because being female she is doubly 'other' to the male writer. Flora, like Fergus,

35 Andrew Noble, 'MacChismo in Retrospect', The Bulletin of Scottish Politics, 2, (Spring 1981), 72-81 (p. 78).

36 See Chapman, p. 19.

and like the more threatening Helen MacGregor in Rob Roy, is associated with extremism and intransigence; but she is also associated with a very different cluster of qualities which have accrued to the figure of the Highlander since the eighteenth century. Flora is linked with ideas such as sensitivity, the imagination, and poetry; and with just such associations the Highlands, presented to the world in the hazy images of 'Ossian' (in reality, James MacPherson) had captured the European Romantic imagination.

Although Waverley must marry Rose, he is enchanted by Flora, and so, to an extent, is Scott. Flora is much more interesting than Rose, just as when in Ivanhoe Scott says of his hero, 'Yet it would be inquiring too curiously to ask, whether the recollection of Rebecca's beauty and magnanimity did not recur to his mind more frequently than the fair descendent of Alfred might altogether have approved', (II, p. 350), he might be speaking for himself. Rebecca is more interesting than Rowena. As Harold Bloom puts it, 'Romanticism stems from the enchantment of the marvellous, the roots of romance'.[37] Flora's power to enchant is emblematic of a recurring central concern in Scott's work, discussed most challengingly by the critic Daniel Cottom, who sees the novels as primarily about 'the mastery of enchantment'.[38]

According to Cottom's provocative interpretation of Scott's ideology, his work exhibits a recurring obsession with power, and the novels can be seen as a 'meditation upon the intertwined natures of mastery and submission' (p. 84). The idea of 'enchantment'

37 The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition (Chicago and London, 1971), p. 3.

38 'The Waverley Novels: Superstition and the Enchanted Reader', p. 85. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

is a key to understanding this. Cottom points out that '"Enchantment" is a word which Scott often uses to name the effects of literature upon men as well as the effect which may be produced by superstition, women, and the glamour of the aristocracy' (p. 86), and an analysis of Scott's attitudes in his fiction towards women, superstition, the past, class differences, and the effects of literature, reveals the persistent concern with power and 'mastery' which stems from his own aristocratic values, and affects his literary techniques.

Scott's use of romance forms reflects his belief in the chivalric code, which assigns a dual role to women, who are both 'objects of veneration and sources of oppression', as Cottom remarks (p. 93). He points out that romance is not an ideologically 'innocent' form, and its attitudes to women reflect its historical origins, both in the ruling class, and the dominant male sex, and these are the roots of its obsession with issues of power (p. 92, p. 99).[39] The concern with power is evidenced in the characteristic figures of the passive hero and the powerful 'masculine' woman in Scott's fiction, whose repeated appearance has often been noted, but rarely analyzed or discussed.

Cottom's article notes that the female figure is also often associated with the idea of superstition, and this is very significant:

39 For discussion of the ideology of romance, see also Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, (London, 1981). Chapter 2 pp. 103-150.

> For as it is described by Scott, the childish nature of superstitious and literary enchantment is also a female nature, both in the figure of the oppressor, and in the figure of the oppressed, the victim of enchantment, who is drawn to yield to his situation of distress with all the shame, guilt, morbidity, and secret pleasure with which women have traditionally been thought to yield to rape. (p. 88).

The self-denial involved in the humiliating submission to the female nature - be it woman or superstition - is paradoxically necessary for the civilizing process held so important by the 'rational' Scott. The powers of enchantment, like the anti-social impulses within the individual may be indeed so powerful, that the only way to control them is to use them, to exploit them.

V

The 'exploitation' of the enchanting and powerful, often symbolic female figure is evident in Waverley; it is also interestingly exemplified in The Heart of Midlothian, in the character of Madge Wildfire. Like Flora and Jeanie Deans, Madge embodies many Romantic concerns, such as the relationship between nature and civilization; but she is an ambiguous figure, and worth considering more closely. Madge, like many other female characters in Scott's fiction, has been largely ignored or regarded with suspicion or confusion by critics. Robert C. Gordon remarks that Madge is 'an ineffectual, though charming, madwomen'.[40] David J. Burt, one of the few critics to pay serious attention to Madge's part in the novel, lists the almost astonishing list of dismissive or disparaging remarks made about her by past critics. Burt's short article postulates a more interesting view of Madge and her role in the novel: 'Possibly overlooked by these commentators, however, are aspects of

40 Gordon, p. 96.

Madge's characterization which suggest that Scott uses her wild ravings to reveal at times an intuitive perception of reality. Through such a role, Scott renders her madness with deliberate artistic intent to establish character contrasts, to anticipate plot developments, and to reinforce thematic patterns'. [41] I suggest that Madge does indeed play a far more important part in The Heart of Midlothian than has been generally recognized, and one which is extremely complex. A consideration of Madge Wildfire's role illustrates some of the ambiguities of Scott's attitudes to women, to nature, the imagination and art, and to his own society, especially in its national dimension.

As Burt suggests, Madge's madness is of great significance. The 'mad' person was once referred to as a 'natural' and the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of nature is a central feature of Romanticism and of Scott's work, very interestingly in this novel. Madge is associated in many ways with nature. She is an isolated figure in the city, ostracized by society, the mob and the authorities alike. She tells Jeanie she prefers to be out in the woods rather than in the town where she is persecuted (The Heart of Midlothian, II, p. 85). In the country she is at ease and in control. There is a strong contrast, too, between her rambling, lawless 'natural' mode of existence, and the idea of the city 'law'. The lack of control in Madge's life is also suggested by her disconnected speech, with its sudden changes of subject and snatches of song and verse. Yet the contrast between town and country, between nature and civilization is not a simple one. Madge's song proclaims her 'Madge

41 'The Heart of Midlothian: Madge Wildfire's Rational Irrationality', in Studies in Scottish Literature, 8, 1, (1970), 184-189, (p. 184).

of the country...Madge of the town' (I, p. 240; II, p. 94), and the irrationality which she displays is not only a feature of the so-called natural world, but of the 'civilized world' as well, for it is a town mob which in its irrational hatred destroys Madge.

Madge's mother, Meg Murdockson, more fully suggests the dangerous and threatening aspect of uncontained nature; she is often compared to an animal (e.g. I, p. 274), but it should be noted that while her name (like that of Murdstone in David Copperfield echoing the word 'murder') suggests her evil nature, Madge, her daughter, is never called by her mother's name and thus acquires a separate identity. For all her 'madness' and the crimes she has supposedly committed, Madge herself is used as a means of criticizing society, rather than being the object of criticism. There is a strong pathos in her memories of her time in prison. She keeps the door of the hut on the moor shut with her own back, and tells Jeanie, "Wha wad hae thought but mysell of making a bolt of my ain back-bane! But it's no sae strong as thae that I hae seen in the Tolbooth at Edinburgh. The hammermen of Edinburgh are to my mind afore the world for making stancheons, ring-bolts, fetter-bolts, bars, and locks"' (II, pp. 72-3). Her speech draws attention forcibly to the rigidity of the law, its cruelty and its uncompromising power.

The Tolbooth may be seen as a symbol of social injustice, and also as representing in a more general sense the inhibiting and repressive nature of society and so-called 'civilization'. Madge's use of her back as a bar is very different from the bolts and bars of the prison, for where the prison is built to keep the prisoner inside, to contain 'evil', to constrain and only in a more indirect

way to protect, Madge is keeping evil out. Like Jeanie, her central purpose is benevolent and protective rather than restrictive, and in this way both women contrast with the authorities. Madge's use of her own body as a bolt on the door represents another difference between her and the social world of the law and officialdom. Her body, unlike the iron bolts of the prison, is no effective way of barring out evil; it is, indeed, her physical vulnerability which has broken her, and in this she is like Effie. Madge is a vulnerable human being in a society which does not recognize or respect individual weakness or individual freedom, and in this she also parallels Jeanie, another solitary woman who opposes society, and becomes a symbol of alternative and oppressed values.

Critics have drawn attention to Scott's reference to 'The Thorn'.[42] There is obviously a similarity of plot between Wordsworth's poem and this novel, and Scott may well have had the poem, or more probably, traditional ballads of this kind, in mind. Like Wordsworth's solitary figures, Madge exists essentially outside society. She is a social and moral outcast, an isolated figure. The interrelated meanings of Wordsworth's solitaries are complex but on one level they represent the exiled values of the community:

> The spirit of community...has been dispossessed and isolated to a wandering, challenging if passive, embodiment in the beggar. It is no longer from the practice of community, or from the spirit of protest at its inadequacy, but from
>
> this solitary being,
> This helpless wanderer
>
> that the instinct of fellow feeling is derived. Thus an essential isolation and silence and loneliness have become the only carriers of nature and community against the rigours, the cold abstinence, the selfish ease of ordinary society.[43]

42 see Burt, p. 186.

43 Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London, 1973), p. 130.

A whole series of such solitary figures appears in Scott's fiction, and they recur in much later Scottish fiction as well.

One way in which Madge is used to criticize her society, which has lost its sense of 'community', is in her role as seducee, something little commented on by critics, although Effie's role has been discussed, and it has been pointed out that Madge is 'the singing, simpering, weeping embodiment of man's inhumanity to woman, infinitely richer and stranger than any of Wordsworth's idiot boys or deranged maidens'. [44] Madge, like Effie, is a classic case of the poor girl seduced and abandoned by the rich young man: indeed, their seducer is in fact the same man. In this, Madge's role is a conventional one, and she is in many ways conventionally feminine. Her concern with her appearance caricatures the vanity of the young society woman. She says she dances to 'my bonny Lady Moon', (I, pp. 254-5, p. 275; II, p. 74), and the moon, is of course, traditionally associated with women. When Madge is asked about Nicol Muschat and his wife she replies:

> "Ye see, I spoke to them mysell, and tauld them byganes suld be byganes - her throat's sair misguggled and mashackered though; she wears her corpse-sheet drawn weel up to hide it, but that canna hinder the bluid seiping through, ye ken. I wussed her to wash it in St. Anthony's Well, and that will cleanse it if ony thing can - But they say bluid never bleaches out o' linen claith - Deacon Sanders's new cleansing draps winna do't - I tried them mysell on a bit rag we hae at hame that was mailed wi' the bluid of a bit skirling wean that was hurt some gate, but out it winna come - Weel, ye'll say that's queer; but I will bring it out to St. Anthony's blessed Well some braw night just like this, and I'll cry up Ailie Muschat, and she and I will hae a grand bouking-washing, and bleach our claise in the beams of the bonny Lady Moon, that's far pleasanter to me than the sun - the sun's ower het, and ken ye, cummers, my brains are het eneugh already " (I, pp. 254-5).

44 Crawford, Scott, p. 102.

This passage again illustrates Madge's preoccupation with traditionally 'feminine' pursuits such as washing, and the constant reminder of dead babies is also striking; so, too, is the parallel between Ailie Muschat and Madge herself. Madge, although not married to Staunton, has been seduced and abandoned, effectively both married and murdered by him. At one point she tells Jeanie, '"Ye maun ken I was ance dead mysell," Here the poor maniac sung in a low and wild tone:-

> My banes are buried in yon kirkyard
> Sae far ayont the sea,
> And it is but my blithesome ghaist
> That's speaking now to thee'. (I, p. 74)

The death-in-life which is Madge's existence has been brought about by her 'husband' Staunton, who exploits Madge; and he has not only abused her feminity, he also exploits the 'masculinity' of her appearance, for he dresses up as Madge in order to escape recognition when carrying out his part in the Porteous murder. Madge truly is a scapegoat for all his crimes, therefore, although this has not been remarked upon by critics. It should not pass unnoted, furthermore, that Staunton was suckled by Madge's mother, who claims to have maternal feelings for him, as the first child she held at her breast (II, p. 80). Staunton must therefore be seen not only as Madge's lover, but in a sense also as her brother. Yet Madge suffers for her original submission to him, both in her mental suffering and through society's cruelty.

Although Madge is thus quite specifically a female victim, she is not easily assimilated to a conventional view of femininity. She is an ambiguous figure, being both 'ultra-feminine' in her predicament, and 'ultra-masculine'. She is described as being of

wild, handsome appearance, with features 'coarse and masculine', and 'a commanding profile' (I, p. 238). This strong and masculine appearance suggests that Madge has some kind of power. One way in which she has power is in her knowledge of Staunton and his accomplices, the subversive forces in society, knowledge which the authorities need, and which she is able to withhold. Furthermore, although it has often been pointed out that Jeanie is in some ways the agent of Madge's redemption, it should also be observed that Madge is Jeanie's guide. Madge, again, has crucial knowledge. She has the power to save Jeanie from the murderous forces of Meg Murdockson and her accomplices, and to deliver her to safety.

Madge also plays a powerful role in the narrative of the novel. She is Jeanie's guide on her journey, and she presents not only Jeanie, but the reader, with a literary and moral interpretation of the events of the first part of the novel. It is Madge who suggests to Jeanie and the reader the meaning of their journey: Jeanie is Christiana, and she, Madge, is Mercy. This draws attention to the fact that Jeanie is on a quest for mercy and she has shown mercy to Madge while Madge in turn shows mercy to her. Madge's self-appointed role as 'mercy' highlights the callousness and moral failure of their society which has little mercy for Effie or Madge. Madge takes Jeanie to Mr Staunton, to whom she refers as 'the Interpreter'. She describes what she hopes will happen:

> "But we'll knock at the gate, and then the keeper will admit Christiana, but Mercy will be left out - and then I'll stand at the door trembling and crying, and then Christiana - that's you, Jeanie - will intercede for me; and then Mercy - that's me, ye ken - will faint; and then the Interpreter - yes, the Interpreter, that's Mr Staunton himself, will come out and take me - that's poor, lost demented me - by the hand, and give me a pomegranate, and a piece of honeycomb, and a small bottle of spirits, to stay my fainting - and then the good times will come back again, and we'll be the happiest folk you ever saw." (II, pp. 96-7).

In fact, of course, Madge is not admitted, she never even gets as far as the door. It is significant that the clergyman is called by her 'the Interpreter', for while Madge's interpretation of events shows a desire for mercy, the interpretation of the moral establishment excludes her and denies her mercy. Mr. Staunton may have, as Madge says, '"eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, and he stands as if he pleaded wi' men"' (II, p. 96), but he has no true Christian humanity; this society denies the spirit of Mercy.

Madge represents some values upheld in the novel, and in her role as victim she is used to criticize society, while she also plays a key role in the narrative. However, while Scott the storyteller uses her in these various ways, he is also an interpreter and ultimately rejects Madge from his text. Of course, in Scott's moral, orthodox scheme of things Madge cannot be allowed to survive, any more than Effie can go unpunished. Her submission to Staunton would be enough to ensure her inevitable punishment or departure from the moral framework of the novel. Alexander Welsh has noted that Scott believes, in accordance with the chivalric code, that society is based on the influence of women:

> But the main argument is that society cannot condone a moral transgression without opening the door "to the most unbounded licentiousness". An act of transgression is as final or absolute as the lines of morality, which are fixed by prescription. Though Scott writes that the transgressor may "be restored to society", his further remarks qualify her readmission to the point of denying it altogether. Because of the floodgate principle the seduced female can be tolerated only on the condition of her "humiliation and abasement ".[45]

45 Welsh, p. 125.

Both Effie and Madge are punished for their sexual transgression, which threatens the stability of a society that rests on female morality.

Madge Wildfire is also, however, a Romantic figure, and one viewed more ambiguously than Jeanie is by her creator. Madge represents on one level what Northrop Frye discusses as the oracular mysteries of nature.[46] Like some of Scott's other wild women, such as Meg Merrilies in Guy Mannering and Ulrica in Ivanhoe, Madge is possessed of vital truths, information and insights, often enigmatically expressed. Her very power, which is associated with her closeness to nature, makes her threatening. Thus the 'positive' side of nature has another aspect:

> In one sense romanticism demanded the freeing of human beings from repressive institutions, the realization of the true self, and thus implied a new life for women. But also men continually looked backwards seeking a golden age of naïve harmony and elevated woman as the noble primitive. With this went always an element of fear. Nature must be contained.[47]

Scott does not wish to admit the mysterious powers of untamed nature too completely, for civilization must prevail.

Madge is also removed from the novel because she represents the literary imagination itself. She has presented Jeanie, and the reader, with a literary and moral interpretation of the events of the first part of the novel. Her songs and snatches of poetry render her a source of lyrical insight, of symbolic and poetic truth, through the inherent poetry of her speech and songs, and because of the light they shed on the action of the novel itself. The

46 A Study of English Romanticism (New York, 1968), p. 28.

47 Rowbotham, p. 38.

literary imagination is often represented as female by other Romantic poets, by Keats in 'Lamia' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', for instance. Like these female figures, Madge is powerful; but she is rejected by Scott, whose belief in the importance of 'Reason' is paramount. Cottom comments that superstition in Scott's fiction is always of powerful and compelling interest; indeed, it is 'so powerful that it may be impossible to control it except by exploiting it'.[48] Madge is associated obliquely with superstition, but more importantly with related ideas such as the power of literary enchantment, and Scott uses her, because she is of compelling interest. However, he must also control her, and he uses his power as a literary creator, to keep her within bounds. Having exploited her, he punishes and disposes of her.

Nevertheless, that which she stands for is in some measure continued after her death in the novel. Jeanie releases the Whistler, Effie's child in fact, but Madge's child in spirit, and the forces of nature and the 'irrational', are released again in society. The Whistler goes to America, where he joins the Indians, the savages which so fascinated the Romantics, and which represent his 'primitive' nature. This interestingly foreshadows Stevenson's The Master of Ballantrae, where Canada is the setting for the release of repressed forces in society.

It is also important to note Madge's significance in a political sense, for in other ways, too, she illustrates Scott's ambivalence. Thomas Crawford, who describes Madge at one point, rather curiously,

48 Cottom, p. 95.

as a 'mad harlot', [49] points out more usefully that Madge is 'pure symbol, the creation, almost, of the language itself, of Scots vernacular and Scots-English folk culture' (p. 102). The specifically national aspect of Madge's identity should not be overlooked. Like some male characters such as Edie Ochiltree in The Antiquary and Wandering Willie in Redgauntlet, and more especially like Meg Merrilies in Guy Mannering, Madge is clearly linked to the folk culture of Scotland that is so closely associated with national identity.

The Queen Caroline dispensation indicates what critics have regarded as the unionist tendency of the novel; but there is considerable complexity in Scott's treatment of the issues as they are personified in Madge. Madge has been seduced and ruined by Staunton, who has also seduced another young Scottish peasant girl. Staunton himself is English, a son of the Established Church and the aristocracy. His abuse of Madge is compounded, as we saw, by his impersonation of her during the Porteous incident, when he is supposedly fighting for a popular Scottish justice as opposed to that of the Establishment. Madge, the oppressed folk culture of Scotland, is exiled from 'civilized' city society, and exploited by those claiming to fight for Scotland. This illustrates Staunton's hypocrisy, and is a damning indictment of him and what he stands for, and of a situation in which such exploitation can occur. It is also surely significant that it is an English mob, in Carlisle, which finally kills Madge. This would seem to suggest a tempering of Scott's belief in English justice and the quality of English 'civilization'.

49 Scott, p. 94. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

The fact that Madge is of the poor is also important, not only because it is her links with the folk which make her represent Scottish identity; Scott's handling of this aspect of her identity also suggests his ambivalent attitudes to class and society. Madge dresses up as a 'fine lady', only to look ridiculous to polite society, which mocks her. Yet it is this very society which has abused her that instils such longings in her, but which bars her from union with the likes of Staunton, her social 'superior'. When Madge dies with the song 'Proud Maisie' on her lips, we can only wonder at the implications. No-one in the novel save Madge herself sees her as a proud lady, but the song has such poetic power that we are surely compelled to contrast its singer with the 'true' aristocrats such as Staunton.

Scott uses Madge to show up the hollowness and hypocrisy of society, but while he shows others exploiting Madge - the very essence of Scotland - he exploits her himself. Like Flora MacIvor she is a 'colourful' character, who provides imaginative power, but who is dispensed with when the time has come to bring about a socially appropriate and politically moderate conclusion. There would be no place for Madge in a settled, reasonable and stable Great Britain. However, as we have seen, Scott undermines his own orthodox moral and political ending by creating a character of great power and poignancy, and his ambivalence is further suggested by his release at the end of the Whistler, who kills his aristocratic English father but spares his Scottish-born mother for a gentler fate. Although Scott cannot permit the existence of subversive forces too close to home, the Whistler's presence may be admitted in the New World, itself a place of unknown powers, frightening but fascinating. There 'the Scottish spirit' can live on. Madge and the Whistler

represent disruptive forces that, like superstition, are not easily dismissed: 'While superstition must always be checked and the unreasonable enjoyment of its romance chastised, it can never be completely rejected and one's regard for it can never be completely analytic because no matter what else it may be, it is always powerful - of compelling interest'. [50]

VI

Madge is not explicitly associated with superstition, but this is much more obviously a feature of The Bride of Lammermoor. Like The Heart of Midlothian this late work of Scott's is of particular interest for a discussion of many of the issues already raised, revealing certain central contradictions affecting the representation of women. It is also, like The Heart of Midlothian especially important for a consideration of later Scottish fiction. As many critics have agreed, it is an essentially 'poetic' novel, usefully considered from the point of view of its symbolism and imagery, which in many ways point forward to later Scottish novels. [51]

The ideas of 'literary enchantment' and 'superstition' are of considerable importance in The Bride of Lammermoor, which contains a number of incidents, events and characters which cannot be simply explained away in rational terms. Andrew Hook has argued very persuasively that despite its 'Gothic extravaganza' [52] of a plot, this novel is related in a rational tone which counters the melodramatic events. Yet the fatalism of the central plot is striking,

50 Cottom, p. 95.

51 For instance, Graham McMaster, Scott and Society, p. 167.

52 Andrew Hook, 'The Bride of Lammermoor: A Re-examination', p. 112, and in a letter in the same periodical, 23, 4 (1969), 498-9.

and there are supernatural phenomena which cannot be easily dismissed.

Superstition is strongly associated with the female characters in this novel. Old women are linked with the supernatural, as witches. There are indeed many references to the play Macbeth (see, for instance, The Bride of Lammermoor, I, p. 31). The 'rational' Scott hedges round the question of witchcraft, explaining that Ailsie Gourlay, for instance, is not a witch, but is one of those women 'who, steeled by want and bitterness of spirit, were willing to adopt the hateful and dangerous character, for the sake of the influence which its terrors enabled them to exercise in the vicinity, and the wretched emolument which they could extract by the practice of their supposed art' (II, p. 113). Lady Ashton plays on Lucy's credulity; and it is a society which is still superstitious, for we are told that Ailsie Gourlay finally dies condemned as a witch.

There is an element of social comment here, which recurs in later fiction dealing with the subject of witchcraft, more extensively discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. The old women point out at the end that the real evil lies in Lady Ashton: '"D'ye see her yonder," said Dame Gourlay, "as she prances on her grey gelding out at the kirkyard? - there's mair o' utter deevilry in that woman, as brave and fair-fashioned as she rides yonder, than in a' the Scotch witches that ever flew by moonlight ower North-Berwick Law"' (II, p. 144). The rich exploit the old women, and revile them as witches, while themselves practicing the worse evil. Yet this 'reasonable' explanation of witchcraft does not altogether detract from the fact that Scott himself exploits the traditional

associations of old women and witchcraft as a sensational element in his novel, and although not supernaturally powerful, these characters are still shown to be evil, and chillingly powerful in their own way. Willa Muir comments on this that 'whatever the reason, the Scottish imagination was long haunted by formidable women - especially formidable old women. They lurked in the anonymous ballads. They troubled the Kirk, which was kept busy denouncing them as witches. They obsessed even Sir Walter Scott, that kindest and most tolerant of authors'. [53]

Furthermore, although the old women may not be 'real' witches, other characters in the novel are possessed of supernatural powers. Old Alice has a gift (or curse) of prophecy that cannot be rationally explained away. I need not point out, as one critic does, that she serves the function of 'a female Tiresias', [54] since Tiresias, of course, was both male and female; but her prophetic role in the novel is certainly crucial. Like Madge Wildfire, Alice is described as having a beauty 'of a bold and masculine cast' (I, p. 151), and is proud and strong of character. Once again, the outwardly disadvantaged woman is actually powerful; when Ravenswood encounters her in the wood, the situation and her appearance and infirmity 'combined to impress him with a feeling of wonder approaching to fear' (II, p. 26). The figure of Alice seen by Ravenswood proves to be a supernatural vision, since it transpires that she is actually dead. In life she has a strange power, however, as well; Lucy describes her in very telling terms as 'the very empress of old women, and queen of gossips, so far as legendary lore is concerned' (I, p. 47), (my italics). Just as, paradoxically, the mad woman

53 Mrs Grundy in Scotland (London, 1936), pp. 110-111.

54 Gordon, p. 104.

had had important insights, so the 'blind' woman sees what the sighted cannot see, beyond external reality. Alice's power cannot be discussed in purely worldly terms; it is supernatural. The power of the supernatural in The Bride of Lammermoor is linked to a central contradiction in the novel, revealing that here as in The Heart of Midlothian, Scott's attitude to the imagination, and by extension to his female characters, is ambivalent. Lucy Ashton, we are told, 'was involved in those mazes of the imagination which are most dangerous to the young and sensitive' (I, p. 73). Lucy particularly has an imaginative and Romantic vision of Ravenswood, and around this she 'went on weaving her enchanted web of fairy tissue, as beautiful and transient as the film of the gossamer, when it is pearled with the morning dew, and glimmering to the sun' (I, p. 74). This dangerous submission to the power of imagination and enchantment is in part Lucy's undoing, leading to her own fate and all the surrounding disasters. Once again a female character is closely associated with imagination, capitulating to its force rather than being, like Madge Wildfire, its representative. Lucy is rather, perhaps, related to the sensitive heroines of Gothic romance, playing a mediumistic role for the powers of nature and superstition, which work through and on her heightened consciousness. [55] Once again, the female is punished by the 'reasonable' Scott for this dangerous association.

Yet, as we have seen, Lucy herself is a character in a narrative which contains the literally unbelievable, such as an old woman who can see into the future, and appears as an apparition to a young man; and indeed Lucy's fate in the novel is clearly paralleled to that of the Naiad in the legend at the beginning. She swoons on the spot

55 See Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, p. 29.

where the Naiad departed; 'Beautiful and pale as the fabulous Naiad in the last agony of separation from her lover' (I, p. 66). Lucy herself becomes the object of Scott's imaginative and superstitious art and has since repeatedly appeared in many other reworkings of the story, testifying to its power. Within the novel itself Lucy has already become an object of art (in Dick Tinto's painting), and although she is punished with death for her enslavement to enchantment, the novel itself suggests the necessity for the imaginative and the supernatural, or at least the danger of denying them. For while Lucy's imagination and belief in romance are her weakness, the supernatural and the imaginative are destroyed at a cost to society. This is shown in the legend of the Naiad. The nymph of the legend is denounced by the church as evil, but although she is a supernatural being, she is clearly not evil, and the spot on which the events take place is meant to be unlucky for the Ravenswoods, for from the time of this killing 'the house of Ravenswood was supposed to have dated its decay' (I, p. 65). In a sense, then, this act leads to all the later disasters.

Lucy must be punished for her 'feminine' capitulation to the powers of imagination, but as in the case of Madge, Scott has surrounded her with contradictions. However, Lucy is not such an interesting character as Madge. This is partly, perhaps, because she reflects the more passive and limited role assigned to a woman of her class in this society; but she also plays a symbolic part which restricts her potential as a 'character'. Lucy represents the 'feminine' passive submission to the forces of enchantment, and is also part of a larger symbolic structure in which her role is a passive one.

Several critics have noted that the novel revolves around a central idea of repressive strength, and its opposite, passivity. Both extremes, as in romance, are personified in women. Donald Davie has remarked that 'what defeats the union (of old family and new) is the inflexibility of Lady Ashton combined with what is in fact its consequence, the excessive pliability of her daughter'.[56] Lady Ashton's strong nature is 'masculine', while her daughter is conventionally extremely feminine. When one critic comments that 'if Edgar is the type of man cut off from the society of his peers, Lucy is the type of man betrayed by authority',[57] it is tempting to correct him and remark that she is a <u>woman</u>, because her femininity is not incidental but part of the central structure of symbolism. The sexual identity of the characters is part of their 'meaning'. The extreme forces of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' cannot co-exist in this novel; although yoked together, they are mutually destructive.

The strong mutual attraction of Lucy and Edgar Ravenswood is doomed because of this. Edgar is an intensely 'masculine' figure. He is not only the <u>Master</u> of Ravenswood, he wears a 'majestic, though somewhat sullen expression' (I, p. 67) (my italics). The symbol of his family is the bull, a complex image, representing not only strength but sexuality, especially male sexuality, and death. However, in saving the weak Ashtons at the beginning, he kills the bull; he spares them from death, but commits a fatal act with respect to his own nature. He destroys his family and betrays his own extreme 'masculinity'. His love for the passive Lucy, 'gentle, soft, timid, and feminine' (I p. 39), whose gentle nature means that

56 <u>The Heyday of Sir Walter Scott</u> (London, 1961), p. 159.

57 McMaster, p. 176.

she 'willingly received the ruling impulse from those around her' (I, p. 40), leads to their mutual destruction.

The novel revolves around the spiritual kinship and spiritual hostility [58] of the characters, which are expressed through their sexual identity, and this central metaphoric/symbolic construct is also expressive of the failure of Scottish society, and an implicit criticism of it. The oppression of the weak in this society is revealed as contributing to its downfall. The killing of the Naiad in the original legend is not only an act emblematic of the destruction of imagination, it is an act of cruelty; and in the more 'rational' explanation which is also supplied, it has a social dimension. The nymph loved by the Baron, according to the alternative tale, is a 'beautiful maid of plebeian rank' (I, p. 65). Lady Ashton also regards her daughter's want of spirit as being 'a decided mark, that the more plebeian blood of her father predominated in Lucy's veins, and used to call her in derision her Lammermoor Shepherdess' (I, p. 41). Lady Ashton's power is linked to her more aristocratic blood - she is of 'higher' birth than her husband - but she is also lacking in kindliness. Robert C. Gordon comments on The Heart of Midlothian that, 'Except for Jeanie's intense loyalty, the family situations in The Heart of Midlothian are emblems of a widespread social breakdown', [59] and this is true also of The Bride of Lammermoor. As Graham McMaster comments, 'In the earlier novels Scott had celebrated the instinctual kindliness that bound Scottish society together; here, pride and avarice have thwarted the most intimate of relations - parental and marital'. [60]

58 See Hart, Scott's Novels: The Plotting of Historic Survival, p. 324.

59 Gordon, p. 97

60 McMaster, p. 177.

Although the novel criticizes a society which permits, indeed brings about, the destruction of Lucy Ashton, her part in this symbolic structure limits her potential for development as a character, and despite the wealth of imaginative works of art inspired by her story, she herself remains essentially a cipher, a symbolic figure who is little developed for her own sake. The symbolic structure at the heart of The Bride of Lammermoor is important, however, for it recurs in some later works of Scottish fiction. The breakdown of family relations as symbolic of a larger breakdown in society is found in Scottish fiction of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well. What is more, the symbolic significance of sexual identity which appears in The Bride of Lammermoor recurs also in later Scottish fictions, where a similar yoking of dominant masculinity and passive or enfeebled 'femininity' is expressive of a broader societal failure to achieve equilibrium. Writers such as George Douglas Brown, Robert Louis Stevenson and J. MacDougall Hay all use the central idea of the family and sexual identity in symbolic ways to comment on Scottish society.

VII

Graham McMaster has remarked on the recurrence in Scott's fiction of 'the very large number of myths and symbols that have a sexual origin'.[61] It is not necessary to pursue a Freudian interpretation to see that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are often symbolically important in Scott's fiction. Scott's sexual symbolism is not related to eroticism, but is often marked by its displacement by, or expansion into, political and cultural meanings. Another

61 McMaster, p. 224.

novel where this occurs most strikingly is Redgauntlet, where sexual identity is closely linked into the question of Scottish identity. As with the other Scott novels looked at, this work is significant particularly because it appears to make links between sexual identity and national identity which are echoed or repeated in later Scottish fiction.

A curious incident in Redgauntlet which involves the issue of sexual identity is the scene where Darsie is dressed as a woman, and talks to Greenmantle, who turns out to be his sister. In close proximity to her, Darsie finds his earlier romantic passion dies away. Daniel Cottom suggests that rather than dismissing this scene as irrelevant or inexplicable, it would repay the critic to consider it seriously. It may, in fact, offer a key to a characteristic preoccupation of Scott:

> Seen at a distance, as all attractive women must be seen in Scott's code of chivalry, a girl may arouse one's passion; but one can only approach her more closely by involuntarily becoming a woman oneself and by accepting the other woman as a sister. In other words, this scene shows in an extraordinary and yet entirely typical way Scott's attitude towards marriage as opposed to romantic passion and towards the present in general as opposed to the distance of the past. According to these novels, the civilizing process demands the enchanted imprisonment, infantilization, and feminization of men. [62]

This idea is particularly interesting if considered in a national-cultural context, for the civilizing process in Scott's novels is also a process of anglicization.

In Chapter 8 of Redgauntlet we read of the Redgauntlet who kills his own son, albeit accidentally, because of his political, more specifically his Scottish nationalist, zeal. His wife 'had

62 Cottom, p. 89.

been prematurely seized with the pangs of labour, upon hearing the dreadful catastrophe which had taken place. The birth of an infant boy cost her her life' (Redgauntlet, II, p. 27). Because of this, the son she bears carries a horseshoe mark on his forehead, like the mark of Cain, which is a symbol of the father's guilt. Once again, as in The Bride of Lammermoor, from this single fatal event, the fortunes of a family follow with supernatural predictability, as a punishment:

> It is said, that it was then foretold to the Redgauntlet, that on account of his unshaken patriotism, his family should continue to be powerful amid the changes of future times; but that, in detestation of his unrelenting cruelty to his own issue, Heaven had decreed that the valour of his race should always be fruitless, and that the cause which they espoused should never prosper (II, pp. 28-9).

The past and present Redgauntlets of the male line are not only intensely nationalist, and destructive, but intensely 'masculine'. The present Herries is described as being like 'an ancient Hercules' (I, p. 48). His ancestor, of a 'stern and implacable disposition' (II, p. 25), destroyed his wife, setting up a symbolic opposition between Scottish male destructiveness, linked to nationalist enthusiasm, and female creative and protective qualities, which are also linked to anglicization. The later Lady Redgauntlet 'fled from the north of England, determined to break off all communication with her late husband's family, particularly his brother, whom she regarded as having, by their insane political enthusiasm, been the means of his untimely death' (II, p. 207). In reaction, she determined to bring up Lilias and Darsie as 'adherents of the present dynasty' - that is, the Hanoverian. Lilias describes her as being perhaps 'too timidly anxious' (II, p. 207) to exclude them from knowledge of their uncle, still an ardent nationalist.

It is significant that it is while Lilias and Darsie are playing together 'in a walled orchard' in Devonshire (II, p. 209), where their mother lives, that their uncle suddenly swoops down and seizes Lilias. The image of the enclosed garden suddenly violated by the reckless Redgauntlet figures forth again the symbolic contrast between 'safe', gentle femininity - significantly in the south of England - and assertive male Scottish nationalism. The mother is described as thereafter living a secluded life, and the shock she has endured accounts for 'her frequent tears, her starts of hysterical alarm, and her constant and deep melancholy' (II, p. 209). The mother's resistance to the nationalist cause makes her fear also for her son, as Lilias explains to Darsie:

> "It was then that she adopted," said Lilias, "every precaution her ingenuity could suggest, to keep your very existence concealed from the person she feared - nay, from yourself; for she dreaded, as she is said often to have expressed herself, that the wildfire blood of Redgauntlet would urge you to unite your fortunes to those of your uncle, who was well known still to carry on political intrigues which most other persons had considered as desperate" (II, pp. 209-10).

The 'wildfire blood' - the choice of adjective here is significant - is Scottish, Jacobite, nationalist, and in this context, masculine. The 'civilized' world is that of the mother, of the Hanoverian line, of the south of England.

Whereas in The Heart of Midlothian the essence of Scotland, the 'wildfire blood', was female, here, the nationalist cause is personified and upheld by an intensely masculine figure. The association between Scottish national identity and 'masculinity', and especially between nationalist ardour and masculinity, has persisted most vigorously into the twentieth century, finding many expressions in literature and in life. This does not necessarily contradict the

image of 'female' Scotland already shown as presented in Madge or Flora, however. As Malcolm Chapman has pointed out, in his useful analysis of the representation of the Scottish Highlander, the Celt has been defined in terms both of femininity and masculinity, and Chapman suggests that none of the dualisms which he discusses in relation to this 'have any essentially definitive status in relation to the rest'. [63] This applies as much to Scottish identity generally as to the Highlander specifically.

Scott's attitude to the extremely masculine Redgauntlet and his cause is deeply ambivalent, and this too is important for a consideration of later fictional representations of 'masculine' national identity. Graham McMaster quotes from Scott the following interesting passage, in which he is imagining a barbarian and his reactions to modern society. Scott asks:

> Will the simple and unsophisticated being, we ask ourselves, be more inclined to reverence us who direct the thunder and lightning by our command of electricity - control the winds by our steam engines...or take us as individuals and despise the effeminate child of social policy whom the community have deprived of half his rights - who dares not avenge a blow without having recourse to the constable - who like a pampered jade cannot go thirty miles a day without a halt. [64] (my italics)

Redgauntlet is not 'simple and unsophisticated', but in Scott's terms he is a kind of 'barbarian', belonging to a past era of more powerful passions. Redgauntlet, like the barbarian, is 'masculine', viewed by Scott as positively so, as virile ; although not in a position of apparent control as is the more modern and 'sophisticated' man, he has a sexual energy that is more admirable and appealing.

63 Chapman, p. 210.

64 Quoted in Scott and Society, p. 59, from Miscellaneous Prose Works (28 vols, Edinburgh, 1836), vol XVIII, p. 356.

The 'feminine' line of Redgauntlet's family, we have seen, is weak and fearful - admittedly partly because of male energy and destructiveness - and this suggests the lack of sexual energy that is associated with civilization and anglicization. In male terms, this is 'effeminacy', an enfeebling lack of masculinity, indeed a lack of maturity, for the civilized being is the 'child of social policy'.

Evidently, although Scott's plot in Redgauntlet decrees the inevitability of 'civilization', of the union of Scotland with England, he despises something in the civilized product, and admires aspects of that which he shows to be doomed. Although Edwin Muir comments of Scott that he is 'the first writer of really great powers to bow his knee unquestioningly to gentility and abrogate his responsibility...There were not many genteel writers before Scott; there have not been many ungenteel ones since', [65] Scott is evidently not as straightforward in his attitudes as this would suggest. The 'ungenteel' character of Redgauntlet is in many ways presented as appealing, and later recurring images of 'masculine' Scotland are presented with a similar degree of ambivalence. My discussion of the female characters of Scott's fiction and of his representation of sexual identity indicates, I think, that his work is more complex and interesting in these respects than many critics would seem to think. [66]

65 Edwin Muir, Uncollected Scottish Criticism, edited by Andrew Noble (London, 1982), pp. 209-10.

66 I should note that, after completing this chapter, I discovered that a paper by Judith Wilt, 'This Confused Waste: Gender and Identity in The Heart of Midlothian' had been delivered at the Aberdeen Scott Conference in 1982. although it is not published in Scott and his Influence: The Papers of the Aberdeen Scott Conference, 1982, edited by J.H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Aberdeen, 1983). I was not aware of this at the time of writing. I have not read or heard anything by Judith Wilt, and the ideas here are my own.

VIII

Scott is obviously limited by the social stereotypes available to him through the life and literature of his times. Edith Bellenden, Rose Bradwardine, Lucy Ashton, Rowena, and to some extent, Flora MacIvor, are all products of conventional female typecasting. They derive from Scott's observation of polite Edinburgh society, with its restricted roles for women, and they are also related to the 'good' women of romance. In the case of his folk characters, Scott's use of a more popular tradition produces original and impressive results, as in the case of Jeanie Deans, although, of course, she is an outstanding exception in playing such a central role. Some of Scott's more genteel women are also a good deal more interesting than others. Flora, for instance, is a complex figure.

Scott's adoption of the romance tradition assigns somewhat limited roles to women, and lies behind the conventional heroines, but his Romantic interests also lie behind characters such as Flora, Meg Merrilies, Madge Wildfire and others. Many of these figures, representing nature in all its ambiguity, the powers of imagination, and national identity, are complex creations. A focus for Scott's own ambivalence, such figures tend, however, to suffer foreshortened lives, for the reasonable Scott cannot ultimately permit their presence in the rational world which must prevail. His powerful very 'masculine' characters, like Redgauntlet, often suffer the same fate, although again they are ambiguously appealing.

Scott's characters, therefore, present methodological problems to the modern critic and especially to the feminist. There are no secure criteria for judging characters who are often far from 'realistic' in the novelistic sense, and yet who are often situated

in a detailed historical context that may give the appearance of being 'realistic'. Some such characters, Lucy Ashton, for instance, simply appear one-dimensional, and inadequate 'characterization' and blatant manipulation are features of Scott's fiction. Many of his characters are complex and even confused. In other cases, such as that of Madge Wildfire, a recognition of the character's symbolic role enriches our understanding of her part in the novel, and of the novel as a whole.

While today we can see the limitations and contradictions implicit in Scott's representation of women, it should be apparent that he has created some exceptionally interesting characters. Jeanie Deans, among others, widens the possibilities for the future. She stands behind the complex possibilities of A Scots Quair, in which the 'woman of the folk' is again the protagonist, and which adapts romance convention to its own ends. Some of the themes and interests of Scott's fiction suggested by his native culture are pursued by other writers, who also in some instances take up the narrative mode of romance, and whose work often demonstrates many of the same narrative configurations and indeed ambiguities.

One of Scott's most important concerns is the religious culture of Scotland, which contributes to his choice and development of themes, and influences his work in a formal sense. It contributes, as we saw, to his creation of Jeanie Deans, who represents both the moral seriousness of Presbyterianism and opposition to its more repressive aspect. The significance of Presbyterianism in The Heart of Midlothian is repeated in much subsequent Scottish fiction by

other writers, although in a variety of different ways. The representation of women is often tied in closely with this, and the important role of religion, and especially of Presbyterianism will therefore be the subject of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTS OF RELIGION

I INTRODUCTORY : CALVINISM IN SCOTLAND

II SEXUALITY AND SIN : ADAM BLAIR

III ELECTION AND AMBIGUITY : JUSTIFIED SINNER

IV WITCHCRAFT : 'JULIE LOGAN' AND OTHERS

V THE NEW MODERATE THEOLOGY : MACDONALD

VI MODERATISM : THE KAILYARD

VII REACTIONS : THE ANTI-KAILYARD

VIII MODERN ROMANTICISM : NEIL GUNN, THE SERPENT

I

In this chapter I intend to continue discussion of the way in which women are represented in Scottish fiction, by a selective consideration of religious issues.

I suggested that Scottish writers have been much preoccupied with issues of identity. Religion is an aspect of Scottish culture which retained its characteristic Scottish aspect even after the Unions of Crowns and Parliament. The Church and the law were the two national institutions left to Scotland; religion was not merely an institution, but 'played a unifying part too, helping to focus certain kinds of Scottish national feeling that were left with few institutional outlets after the Union'. [1] It is not surprising, given the important role religion and the Church have played in Scottish life, that Scottish fiction often expresses, (sometimes indirectly), habits of mind, social institutions and patterns of behaviour induced and sustained by a strongly Presbyterian Scotland. Furthermore, it is not surprising, given its national significance, that writers concerned with the issue of Scottish identity, have also looked to religion quite consciously as a subject, both in its theological aspect, as we see in Hogg's Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, and in its social aspect, as we see in Galt's Annals of the Parish, one of a sizeable number of fictions which adopt a minister as a central focus for concern with national identity. There is, I suggest, an important and complex relationship

1 David Daiches, The Paradox of Scottish Culture : The Eighteenth-Century Experience (London, 1964), p. 7.

between fiction and religion in Scotland, especially between fiction and the dominant Presbyterianism, [2] although moderate theology is also significant, and the Catholic and Episcopalian traditions should not be forgotten; they have also had links with nationalist feeling. The religious influence in fiction is especially important for the ways in which women are represented. Despite the self-consciousness with which writers increasingly look at the theme of religion and its social manifestations, a striking feature of Scottish fiction is the ambivalence of attitudes created by a continuing fascination with Calvinism, which is often heavily criticized, and the retention of Calvinist attitudes or preoccupations. This is particularly significant for the representation of women, as I will seek to demonstrate. This chapter will necessarily to some extent take the form of a survey, as I chart changes in religious ideas throughout a period of Scottish cultural history. It seems to me essential to adhere to a degree of chronology, as this is a period in which reaction and counter-reaction in religious attitudes are significant for their effects on the fiction, and particularly for the ways in which women are represented.

First of all I will look particularly at the attitudes of Calvinism towards sexuality, especially female sexuality. In a religious system which traditionally identified the Fall as the root of human sin, the 'Scarlet Woman' has been a figure viewed with disapproval, as well as thwarted desire. Many Scottish authors, notably Lockhart, Stevenson and Hay (and, more ironically, Barrie) explore the complexities of the Calvinist mind; some show a critical

2 See David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London, 1961), Chapter VI, pp. 166-197, 'Religion in Scottish Fiction', which supports this view.

awareness of male guilt and hypocrisy, but even those who are sympathetic to the woman in a hostile society sometimes appear equivocal themselves. A typological tendency constantly reasserts itself, [3] and as in the case of nineteenth-century American fiction, the Calvinist influence is both moral, in the attitudes it characteristically suggests towards women, and formal, inducing a symbolic approach to character representation. [4] The ambivalence of authorial attitudes and the pull between symbolic and realistic tendencies often create tensions in the fiction; sometimes this appears as a confusion, while in other cases it is interesting and effective. Coherence of attitude is no guarantee of fictional 'value', since some of the least ambiguous of works are also the least complex; such are most kailyard fictions, for instance.

This chapter indicates that Scottish religious culture is marked by a series of reactions and counter-reactions. A strong reaction against Calvinism manifests itself in the growth of liberal theology, which encourages the identification of women with certain clusters of 'Romantic' ideas, such as the emotions, nature and the past. Women are also used to signify reassurance and security, sometimes representing 'Mother Scotland' herself. This image of women is often presented opposing all that authors see as oppressive in Calvinism, but the idea of femininity it promotes is in many ways reactionary.

3 For some discussion of the significance of typology in Scottish religious thought see Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, The Church in Victorian Scotland 1843-1874 (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 262-5. For discussion of typology in literature in analogous circumstances see Karl Keller, 'Alephs, Zahirs, and the Triumph of Ambiguity: Typology in Nineteenth-Century American Literature', in Literary Uses of Typology, edited by Earl Miner (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), pp. 274-314.

4 See Judith Fryer, The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel (New York, 1976).

However, fiction of the early modern period substitutes instead a picture of Scotland tyrannized by Calvinist-inspired individualism represented in terms of extreme masculinity; women are presented as feeble and oppressed, and their role is again a limited one. Some critics have identified the 'types' of women who seem to recur in Scotland partly as a result of Calvinism; Willa Muir writes of 'the two types of Lowland Scotswoman; the puir auld mithers and the formidable, possibly wild prototypes of Caledonia'. [5] The puir auld mithers are much in evidence around the turn of the century, and such 'wild' women as appear are all too often disposed of in one way or another.

Of course, Scottish society in the nineteenth century probably was in many ways restrictive for women, so that the fictional downtrodden woman may reflect social conditions and the real oppression suffered by some women, and the restrictions on female roles in the novel may be emblematic of actual limitations. Annie Anderson in George MacDonald's Alec Forbes of Howglen, who stays at home while Alec goes off, may reflect the lack of opportunity available to a young woman in her time and place. At the same time, she should be seen as representing an element in the religious education of the novel's hero, and as playing a conventional romance role. The religious or moral ends of Scottish writers often over-ride the needs of female characters; women in Scottish fiction frequently die, repent or disappear. Their creators also sometimes sacrifice such criteria as psychological credibility to the need for a 'good',

5 Mrs Grundy in Scotland (London, 1936), p. 110.

possibly instructional ending. Thus we see such characters as Effie Deans, Charlotte Campbell, and Margaret Galbraith, 'used' by their creators to make a moral point, but in each case the characters lose credibility, and the fiction suffers as a result.

Throughout the period under examination Calvinism, especially, is a persistent influence in the fiction, even after the intervention of liberal theology, which itself developed partly in response to Calvinism. However, I would not wish to suggest that Calvinism is represented by a simple body of ideas, or assign to it too straightforwardly the role it has often been seen as playing, as the most malign and destructive aspect of Scottish culture. I believe certain ideas and attitudes conventionally attributed to Calvinism do have their roots in some aspect of Calvinist faith or practice; nevertheless, we should be sensitive to the way in which the popular view of Calvinism has been fostered, for creative writers have internalized some views of their own culture which arise from historical and cultural conditions rather than from the Calvinist faith itself.

Calvinism has been heavily criticized, from David Hume's denunciation of 'Enthusiasm', through to Edwin Muir's condemnation of it as the bogeyman of Scottish culture; and it is still often blamed for Scotland's artistic and other failures.[6] There are some genuine reasons for such criticisms, no doubt, but we should also be aware of the national inferiority complex which lies behind them. Stereotypic images of Calvinism have grown out of the way in which we have come to view our history. A tendency to focus on 'key' figures in Scottish history has meant that Calvinism has been

6 Calvinism is attacked by poets and novelists such as Iain Crichton Smith, George Mackay Brown and others.

identified with John Knox, and his denunciation of the 'Monstrous Regiment' of women has been widely seen as summing up the Calvinist view of the female sex. This popular view of Knox is too simple, and he by no means adequately represents Scottish Calvinism in any case.[7] While the vision of a male-dominated Scotland probably reflects 'reality' to some extent, it is a reality filtered through the lenses of convention and national self-doubt.

Having said that, the effects of Calvinism in Scottish fiction seem to have run counter to the full and 'balanced' representation of women. I use such phrases advisedly, because obviously there is no 'ideal' against which to measure the images we have, but the restrictions on the representation of women in Scottish fiction seem to have been imposed to a significant degree by the Calvinist view of female sexuality (or a preoccupation with such a view), by the typological and symbolic tendency of Scottish fiction, fostered also by liberal theology, and the concomitant development of metaphorical uses of gender. None of these issues have been discussed in a synthesized or questioning way by critics of Scottish fiction, and it is my intention over the following pages to offer a discussion of some aspects of this important area of inquiry.

II

I would like to look first of all at certain aspects of Calvinism which have affected the representation of women, in Scottish fiction in the nineteenth century. There is, for instance, an important

7 Indeed, as many women supported the Covenanters, a more complete historical view would need to take account of the role of women in the Presbyterian tradition. An early book on the subject is Rev. James Anderson, The Ladies of the Covenant: Memoirs of Distinguished Scottish Female Characters embracing the Period of the Covenant and the Persecution (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, 1857).

relationship between the Calvinist emphasis on Original Sin, and social attitudes to female sexuality.

According to Calvin, Man was first created in the image of God; but Man fell, by his own free will. We know this from the Scriptures, to which Calvin attached the utmost importance: Man must 'submit' to the authority of Scripture, only one of a series of ways in which he must submit to God's omnipotence. The Scriptures give us, in the story of Adam's Fall, an authoritative testimony to our state of sin. Man is not only fallen, but lacks the capacity to understand the full extent of his fallen nature. François Wendel explains the extent to which Calvinism emphasizes the post-Fall state of sin:

> The testimony of Scripture obliges us to acknowledge that our reason is disabled, and that our heart is so evil that we cannot do anything else but sin. By the fact of the Fall we have lost the special prerogative that attached to our having been the immediate purpose of the Creation: the image of God that we bore upon us was destroyed, effaced, or to use Calvin's own more discreet formula, 'it was so deeply corrupted that all that remains of it is a horrible deformity'. [8]

From this analysis it can be seen that the emphasis on sin could lead to the Calvinist believer possessing a strong sense of personal weakness and guilt.

The idea of corruption is attached to the whole of humanity, but it is especially attributed to human sexuality, and weakness expressed in sexual terms. On both counts the female and 'the feminine' become particularly associated with the notion of sin. Sin is defined and described by Calvin as a continual result of the Fall, and his rhetoric identifies the sinfulness of the 'workings of the flesh', which are an

8 Calvin : The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought, translated by Philip Mairet (London, 1963), p. 185. Originally published in French, 1950.

expression of our fallen nature, 'so fecund of every kind of evil that it cannot be inactive'.[9] The use of the word 'fecund' suggests the way evil is associated especially with female sexuality, which is often conventionally related to the idea of 'fecundity' or fertility. Female sexuality is likely to be condemned by an outlook which stresses the Fall of Man, since it was initiated by the woman, Eve. Furthermore, since Adam succumbed to Eve's temptation, female sexuality is a continuous reminder of male weakness also, and thus likely to be reviled by the Calvinist male uneasily aware of his own sin. Calvin identifies the evil tendency of humanity with concupiscence, as St Augustine did, 'but only if we make this addition to it, "that every part of man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul to the flesh, is defiled and altogether filled with that concupiscence"'.[10] This underlines the pervasive consciousness of sexuality associated with sin, although it is also worth noting the way in which human weakness is described in sexual terms; this is significant later when we come to consider the ways in which Calvinism is expressed symbolically in Scottish fiction.

The more direct association between sexuality and sin is of obvious significance. A notable feature of Scottish fiction in the nineteenth, and into the twentieth century, is the exploration of the psychological outlook enforced by the strong links made between female 'concupiscence', temptation, and the prospects of damnation. In a modern Scottish novel which focuses on the 'basic emotion' of the Lowland Scottish male, guilt in response to his own awareness of

9 Wendel, p. 188, quoting Calvin Institutions II, I, 9, from the French version of the edition of 1559.

10 Calvin, Institutions, II, I, 8, quoted by Wendel, p. 188.

sexuality, one character says, '"I think we are all a bit sex-obsessed because we've all got the feeling it's dirty, we're all a bit pervy"' [11]. His friend retorts, '"But that's simply the eschatological emphasis of Calvinism being denied by a positive life force. It is a metaphysical assertion"' (p. 337).

Certainly, there is an enduring resistance to guilt and the repression of sexuality, a resistance embodied for instance in the work of Burns, who condemns the Calvinist attitude to women;[12] and we find in Scottish fiction some healthy, earthy women characters who represent the life-giving aspects of sexuality so denied by the Calvinist view. The lively folk heroines of Galt's The Last of the Lairds triumph over the staider or more foolish men, and much later Lewis Grassic Gibbon celebrates female sexuality in the creation of Chris Guthrie.

Despite this counter-movement, Scottish writers display a continuing interest in exploring the psychology of fear and guilt related to sex, almost invariably on the part of the male character,

11 Alan Sharp, A Green Tree in Gedde (London, 1965), p. 337. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

12 Burns's attitudes are apparent in his poems. The following letter is also revealing:

> As for those flinty-bosomed, puritannic Persecutors of Female Frailty, & Persecutors of Female charms- I am quite sober- I am dispassionate- to shew you that I shall mend my pen ere I proceed- It is written, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain', so I shall neither say, 'G-- curse them! nor G-- blast them! nor G-- damn them! but may Woman curse them! May Woman blast them! May her lovely hand inexorably shut the Portal of Rapture to their most earnest Prayers & fondest essays for entrance! And when many years and much port and great business have delivered them over to Vulture Gouts and Aspen Palsies, then may the dear bewitching Charmer in derision throw open the blissful Gate to tantalize their impotent desires which like ghosts haunt their bosoms when all their powers to give or receive enjoyment, are for ever asleep in the sepulchre of their fathers.

Quoted by Andrew Noble, 'Burns, Blake and Romantic Revolt', in The Art of Robert Burns, edited by R.D.S. Jack and Andrew Noble (London and Toronto, 1980), pp. 191-214 (pp. 198-9).

so that we are trapped within the male consciousness, and see the female only from that point of view. In few English novels do we find such an intense and powerful exploration of the psychological stress of repressed male sexuality as we find in Lockhart's Adam Blair, Hogg's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner or Stevenson's 'Thrawn Janet'.

As Calvinism loses its grip, some writers identify and criticize the destructive effects Calvinist attitudes to sexuality can have on women. Writers show how male sexual repression leads to the violent rejection or destruction of women, and sympathetically indicate the hardship of women's role in Calvinist society; [13] nevertheless, many Scottish writers are themselves still working through Calvinist attitudes, and the process of objectification is only partial. Ian Watt has commented that the attitudes of Puritanism brought about a desexualizing of female characters in fiction, but that this contradicts certain older traditions; 'it is directly opposed to the earlier traditions of Puritanism itself, where such figures as Calvin, John Knox and Milton were notoriously prone to lay more emphasis on the concupiscence of women than of men'. [14] Although Scottish writers often show women to be more

13 The analyses of some Scottish writers may be interestingly compared with those by feminists, of the attitudes of religion and the church to female sexuality. Susan Griffin, for instance, has discussed the way in which both the church and pornography tend to project 'denied knowledge' on to the woman, who comes to represent the self-knowledge a man tries to forget. See Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature (London, 1981), pp. 19-20. First published, New York, 1981.

14 The Rise of the Novel (London, 1957), p. 160.

sexual than English fiction tends to admit,[15] many sexual female characters are created only to be shown as threatening, evil or destructive, and they are themselves destroyed in order to uphold the moral message of the work. Such issues are of significance in Scottish fiction up to the present day, but this discussion may most usefully start somewhat earlier, when Calvinism was closer to being a living faith.

J.G. Lockhart's novel Some Passages in the Life of Mr Adam Blair Minister of the Gospel at Cross-Meikle[16] (after this referred to as Adam Blair) is a fictional work in which we find of central importance that 'intensely scrupulous' conscience which David Craig has identified as being precipitated by 'the dominating religiousness of the culture'.[17] The central character, Adam, is a minister, and as such is at once a representative of the Scottish community with its distinctive religious culture, and a crucial figure in that community. He is a key figure in a moral drama, his name suggesting both the universality of 'Everyman', and the specific theological atmosphere of Calvinism.

Adam's 'fall' in this novel is, like that of his biblical ancestor, precipitated by a woman. His sin is to have a sexual relationship

15 For a brief but suggestive comparison of the 'non-sexual' English heroine with the more interesting European fictional female, see Marvin Mudrick, 'The Originality of The Rainbow', in D.H. Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Mark Spilka (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963), pp. 29-49 (p. 31), originally published in Spectrum, III (Winter, 1959) 3-28.

16 Adam Blair, (Edinburgh and London, 1822); all references are to this edition.

17 Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, see pp. 196-7.

with a married woman, and Lockhart sets out to show the sufferings of Adam's conscience and consciousness, both before and after the sinful act. Lockhart's moral drama takes place in a community still gripped by the Calvinist conscience, and although he is depicting the life of an era which lay in the past even when he wrote, Lockhart appears to write in sympathy with the moral judgements of that community. His presentation of Charlotte Campbell illustrates the influence of a Calvinist perspective, and the novel's focus on Adam's suffering appears to ratify the Calvinist moral orthodoxy. Nevertheless there is an ambiguity about the novel which undermines that moral orthodoxy, and this makes it an interesting, if ultimately unsatisfactory work.

Adam Blair is interesting for the way it records the experience of Adam's conscience. David Craig has noted that it was written at a time when Romanticism was making itself felt in literature, and comments that Adam Blair is 'emotional in its essence'.[18] Certainly, Lockhart records the workings of Adam's consciousness in a vivid prose that symbolically suggests the character's sexual and psychological disturbance. Having given way to his feelings for Charlotte so far as to kiss her when she has rescued him and his child from the river, Adam enters into a heightened state of mind:

> a sort of voluptuous, languid, sultry air, seemed to hang over the whole mass of the retrospect: Red setting suns- broad, calm, purple skies - mighty trees, loaded with leaves and blossoms - these were the strange accompaniments - strangely jumbled together and ill defined, it is true - of screams, and battles, and headlong peril, and blood, and death, and misery. Beautiful women's shapes, smiling eyes, and burning blushes, darted in glimpses here and there from amidst the thickest of tumults (p. 168).

18 Introduction to Adam Blair (Edinburgh, 1963), p. vi.

The natural world here is an effective register of emotional and sensual disturbance, suggesting Adam's response to Charlotte's sexuality, and his sense of guilt at that response. When he goes to see Charlotte in Uigness, the water of the loch, whose significance needs little Freudian interpretation, stimulates Adam to further heightened responses: 'His eyes reeled in his head, amidst the countless glitter of the waters; and he lay in a state of mingled stupor and bewilderment, and not without occasional flashes of a dizzy delight' (p. 210). The power with which Lockhart suggests Adam's sexual desires is remarkable, and is one clue, perhaps, to the ambiguous effect of the book as a whole with regard to the moral message it apparently seeks to set forth. These passages recording Adam's conscience convey Lockhart's fascination with tormented sexuality.

However, despite the (almost too) vivid expression of Adam's awakened sexuality, Lockhart uses some of these intensely vivid symbolic scenes also to reinforce the moral meaning he is setting out to express. Images of falling and dropping contribute to the reader's understanding of Adam's experience. While fishing, and at the same time thinking about Charlotte, Adam drops his fishing-rod into the river, 'into the dark pool far below him' (p. 191) in a gesture which effectively denotes the fusion of the sexual with the moral aspects of the act. Adam's attempts to retrieve his lost rod are of course unsuccessful. He follows the rod as it floats along, only to see it'disappear over the rocks amidst the shower of spray that rises eternally from the boiling basin underneath' (p. 192), and he lingers, 'staying till his ears were half stunned, and his eyes giddy in his head' (p. 192).This scene prefigures his own fall,

which is again symbolically suggested when he goes to visit Charlotte at Uigness. It is no doubt significant that the scenes of Adam's most heightened passion and disturbance take place in a Highland setting, for, within the metaphoric construct that has dominated since the eighteenth century, the Highlands are seen as 'barbaric', associated with the emotions, with extremes of experience, and with the idea of a destructive moral licence. Before entering the tower in which Charlotte awaits, (there are surely phallic connotations here) Adam nearly loses his life, for Charlotte inadvertently drops a sword on him. This rather clumsily symbolic scene (p. 217) prefigures the action that will follow. The sacrificial overtones suggest that Adam is soon to be Charlotte's victim; that because of her he will nearly lose his life, both literally and morally.

The fact that Charlotte is not a properly religious person establishes the moral message: 'Mrs Campbell was far from being an infidel, - but there were moments in which she could scarcely be said to be a believer; - and at all times, when she spoke upon topics of a religious nature, expressions escaped her which gave pain to the unsullied purity of Blair's religious feelings' (p. 116). Charlotte is a distraction from Adam's true religious feeling and vocation; and this is, of course, most strongly suggested in the seduction scene, which, like the Old Testament story, charts the temptation of man by woman. Charlotte leads Adam up the stairs of the tower to a room where she builds a fire, 'then stooping on her knees, she blew, and the flame was easily excited, and the chamber was filled with the ruddy light' (pp. 218-9). The sexual overtones here are obvious, but the fiery setting also suggests the flames of a hell, built by Charlotte, where Adam will burn as a

sinner before too long. In this meaningful setting, Charlotte intoxicates the bemused minister, who seems,not unlike a Scott hero, wholly passive throughout:

> "Come, Adam," said she, "you were cold but now, and you must be hungry too. Eat and drink, dear Adam, we shall have time enough for talking and thinking hereafter. Drink, Adam," and she poured a large glass from a flask of wine as she spoke, "drink, drink, dear Adam, and I will pledge you gaily - Come, drink, Adam, for your own sake, or for mine."
>
> Mr Blair swallowed the wine she poured for him, and she poured glass after glass, and would take no refusal; and whether from that, or from the great heat of the fire she had kindled, in a room that would at any rate have appeared warm to him after being so long exposed to the sea-breezes, or from whatever cause, it seemed to him, in a moment, as if he could not breathe without difficulty (pp. 219-20).

Charlotte's rhetoric, with the repetition and use of imperatives, suggests her insistence, and Adam's passive capitulation to her feverish demands; and of course, the emotional quality of the scene is heightened. The repetition of the name Adam at this crucial moment rams home the significance of what is happening: Adam is referred to as Mr Blair throughout the novel, so this use of his name here is deliberate and special. In the satanic atmosphere of his approaching perdition, Adam is tempted by his Eve. After the fall itself, discreetly left to the imagination, Adam wakes and immediately the association of Charlotte with sin and treachery is re-established: 'and he started at once from the couch of Charlotte as if he had been wreathed in the coils of a serpent' (p. 223). Charlotte is now worse than Eve; she is the very serpent of evil itself. This is Adam's perception of her, but the author has a moral purpose in allowing us to be party to this idea. Adam has been led into sin, and now he must repent, in order to illustrate the moral 'message' of the book.

However, while Charlotte apparently seduces Adam, their relationship is presented with a degree of ambiguity. Charlotte is not totally evil. She has been badly used by other men, and she has long cared for Adam. When she recounts her story to Adam, we are told, 'There is not, nor ever was, a man in the world having the common feelings of a man, who could have heard such a story with indifference' (p. 122). There are, furthermore, conflicts between the controlling narrative voice, and the implications generated by certain scenes. When Blair steps up behind Charlotte in the graveyard, the omniscient narrator tells us, 'The feelings of a brother and a friend were blended with those of a Christian and a priest' (p. 103), yet Charlotte reacts to his touch, and only a little later we see Blair kissing Charlotte passionately and heedlessly. A brother and a friend? We might explain this as Adam's own lack of self-knowledge, but that it is the narrator who conveys this information. Mrs Semple tells Charlotte that '"it would be a happy circumstance if he would make up his mind to marry again"' (p. 136). Soon after, a Wordsworthian wise old man comes along, and finding Adam and Charlotte seated together, assumes them to be man and wife. These scenes seem to imply a tragic irony: Adam and Charlotte would make a happy couple, but circumstances hold them apart. This is never explicitly stated; and the latent idea that they are married in spirit if not in fact, complicating the moral message that their adultery is wrong, is never fully confronted. This issue remains unresolved, and somewhat unsatisfactory.

Still more confused is the presentation of Charlotte. She is presented typologically as the Scarlet Woman in the seduction scene, but she is not wholly bad. For Lockhart's purpose of course, it is

better that Charlotte not be wholly evil, for this would make Adam's sin with her inexplicable and possibly unredeemable. However, Charlotte's complexity is also suggestive of some confusion on Lockhart's part, and eventually undermines the moral message he is apparently trying to put forward. F.R. Hart has described Charlotte as 'as complex a female character as can be found in nineteenth-century British fiction'.[19] This is claiming too much; she has not the fictional coherence or psychological depth of Jane Eyre, Maggie Tulliver, or Becky Sharp. Nevertheless, to the modern reader Charlotte has some interesting attributes, being sexual, passionate and spirited. The problem in Adam Blair is that Lockhart conveys to us Charlotte's powerful qualities and self-consciousness, and then condemns her as wayward and sinful; but our sympathy for her has been aroused, and this is surely a response to an implicit sympathy conveyed by her creator, and not merely a twentieth-century interpretation. It is difficult ultimately to accept unquestioningly the moral which is enforced at her expense.

Before she dies, Charlotte tells herself she is to blame for Adam's fate:

> Is it for me - me miserable - to complain of him that I have ruined - undone - undone perhaps for ever? Calm and pure was his spirit, - calm, even as those waters, till my hand stirred their depths. Would to God his calmness could be restored like theirs. For a moment I can wound and disturb that glassy surface, and in an instant it slumbers over the unfathomed depth below, as smoothly as before my rash hand did its deed. But oh! what time, what healing length of time shall be able to soothe the spirit I have tortured from its repose?....A fiend came to the dwelling of sorrow and innocence when I came to theirs. When shall that lowly roof hang again over untroubled heads? I have spoiled them of all, of every thing: and yet I reproached Adam Blair - yes, I reproached him with my eyes, and he turned from me as if I, not he, had been the victim (pp. 235-6).

19 The Scottish Novel, p. 79.

Charlotte's eventual death might be read as a suitable fictional 'punishment' for her sins, but close examination of the action of the novel reveals an interesting sequence of events. Charlotte saves Adam's life on no less than three occasions. She saves him and his child from drowning [20]; after the adultery she prevents Adam from committing suicide, when he topples a stone into a 'melancholy tarn' and contemplates following it; and she has Adam taken to Uigness and cared for there, when he is feverish. She herself dies from the fever that has afflicted Adam, and thus sacrifices herself for him.

However, Adam is unconscious during her death, and learns of it only later. He is shocked and repentant, nevertheless, 'Blair, meanwhile, strong in resolve, even in the midst of misery and weakness, conquered the thousand thoughts that would have banished repose, and slept on, perhaps, with such deep and death-like slumbers as visit hopeless men' (p. 266). Adam, then, does not lose sleep over her death, and although it is intimated that Blair feels grief, we do not gain access to his consciousness as we did earlier. We do not have a vivid sense of his suffering now, as we did of his previous sexual longing and disturbance and his guilt at having 'fallen'. His years of penance therefore appear to be related to his 'uncleanness', rather than to Charlotte's suffering and death.

Before she 'repents', Charlotte has a rebellious moment. Adam has turned from her, telling her they must part, and she should '"- go, and sin no more,-"' (p. 232). She thinks of her isolation:

20 This is symbolically significant, if we consider the extent to which water - symbolism dominates this novel. Charlotte saves him from the element which she believes herself to have disturbed.

> The sense of utter desertion, for the first time, mingled with the pangs of contrition; and her woman's breast panted beneath the burden of hopeless misery. "Alone, alone, quite alone," said she to herself, "alone as in the grave. No last look of love to dwell with me - alas! not one. I am pitied - ha! perhaps I am scorned, - perhaps I am hated.- Love! Oh, I was never loved. Even now, - it is but of Isobel Gray he thinks - he prays to her spirit, - he wastes no thought on the living heart that is broken. - Oh, that it would break!" (pp. 233-4)

Although she becomes again contrite and self-blaming, this passage is most interesting, because we are allowed a sustained insight into Charlotte's mind, which establishes a period of identification with her, and we are, however briefly, presented with a different perspective on events than the one apparently offered as the orthodox and 'correct' one.

I suggest that this passage, in conjunction with the events of the novel, seriously undercuts the surface message. Charlotte's plaint finds enough echoes in the narrative to achieve some credibility; Charlotte, to put it crudely, has had a raw deal. Such a perspective on events, however, subverts the moral point. Adam's violent protests as he is placed back on the bed where he sinned with Charlotte suggest to us the intended moral of the story. Lockhart's point is that adultery is wrong, especially for a minister. The moment we start seeing things from Charlotte's point of view, the whole 'meaning' of the story subtly alters; and this, I suggest, is why Charlotte dies, and why she dies 'offstage'. Her death is a suitable 'punishment' for her sins, and prevents her diverting attention from Lockhart's moral theme. She is primarily significant to Lockhart as a catalyst for Adam's 'fall', rather than as a character in her own right. If Adam is made to dwell too much on her death, she might seize our attention, which should be focused on Adam's predicament.

She is therefore conveniently killed off, just as Flora MacIvor, another character who threatens the status quo of the novel, is bundled off to a distant convent. However, Charlotte does not die without planting a few awkward seeds in the attentive reader's mind. Adam's consciousness during her death suggests his self-absorption.

From a modern perspective, Adam may be seen to suffer from Ichschmerz.[21] Although Adam is ostensibly committed to the community and its morality, the over-all effect of the work is an inward one, with the reader being subjected to the emotions and psychological disturbance of the male central character, who has affinities with the Romantic hero. His dominance of the work in which he appears 'stems not from his activity, but from the interest in his own psyche, since his heroic assertion is the egocentric one of his own personality, far indeed from the hero's traditional commitment to a cause outside himself' (p. 43). Lockhart does not acknowledge this destructive aspect of his hero, but it emerges implicitly, I suggest, in the ways discussed. Elsewhere, in The History of Matthew Wald, for instance, Lockhart more explicitly presents a Presbyterian hero who destroys two women, and he explores there, too, the more extreme aspects of the Presbyterian character through such personae as the murderer John McEwan, who admits guilt, but, the narrator tells us: 'Never was such a specimen of that insane pride. The very agony of this man's humiliation had a spice of holy exultation in it.'[22]

21 A term first used by William Rose, referred to by Lilian Furst, The Contours of European Romanticism (London, 1979), p. 44. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

22 J.G. Lockhart, The History of Matthew Wald (Edinburgh, 1844), p. 217.

III

The workings of Adam's conscience, and concomitant psychological disturbance, and the extreme moral judgements to which he and Charlotte are subjected, are each a manifestation of Calvinism. To understand these more fully, it is necessary to be aware of the doctrine of election. Although Adam does not consider himself 'elect', this doctrine is an important aspect of Calvinist thinking. According to the doctrine, each individual is either elect or damned. The elect cannot be lost: in Calvin's words, 'Their salvation has such sure and firm supports that even if the whole machine of the world broke down, this could not fall. It rests upon the election of God, and could change or disappear only with the eternal wisdom'. [23] Those who are not saved, however, must therefore be damned, and this puts extraordinary pressure on the individual. Gordon Marshall has discussed the way in which the Calvinist code of ethics demands adherence of its believers, and points out 'Weber maintains that the doctrine of predestination creates a psychological crisis amongst believers since it compels them to address the question "Am I of the elect?", yet Calvinist doctrine as a whole provides no mechanism by which this question may be answered'. [24] The Calvinist believer is thus cast back on himself or herself, for the only answer to the question can be 'Yes, I am of the elect', since to admit doubt is to admit damnation.

Although Calvinism, like American Puritanism, strictly emphasizes the submission of self, the need for self-abnegation, even self-contempt,

23 Calvin, Opera Omnia Quae Supersunt, I, 73, quoted by Wendel, pp. 278-9.

24 Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the Development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707 (Oxford, 1980), p. 88.

and the need for submission to God, a paradox results; for Calvinism also requires the individual belief in self according to the doctrine of election. Sacvan Bercovitch has commented of American Puritanism that the rhetoric of its writers reveals the paradox. While stressing the need for self-abnegation, since man is a fallen creature, the Puritans actually dwell obsessively on the notion of 'self':

> We cannot but help feel that the Puritans' urge for self-denial stems from the very subjectivism of their outlook, that their humility is coextensive with personal assertion. Necessarily, all the militancy they hoped would abase the self released all the energies of the self, both constructive and destructive. Never was form more expressive of content than in their pervasive use of the personal mode, whether as confession (self-display as the chief of sinners), or as eulogy (fascination with famous men...), or as exhortation (appeals to the will to acknowledge its own impotence). All these testify to the same impasse. [25]

Despite the supposed self-deprecation of Adam Blair, it is perhaps his very Calvinist conscience which leads to a form of Romantic egocentricity. In Adam Blair this is unintentionally displayed, but the self-absorption of the hero is ironically pointed up later in Barrie's short story 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan', whose central character is also a minister called Adam. [26] In Hay's Gillespie we again find the exploration of a young man's tortured psyche, disturbed by the sexuality of a woman.

25 The Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven and London, 1975), pp. 18-19.

26 See also a short story by 'Fiona Macleod', who incorporates references to a destructive character called 'Adam Blair' into 'The Sin-Eater', in The Sin-Eater / The Washer at the Ford and other Legendary Moralities (London, 1910) pp. 22-3. The choice of name may be coincidental, but William Sharp was anti-Calvinist.

The doctrine of election contributes importantly to male judgements of women. The Calvinist view of women emphasizes the evil of female concupiscence, which must be rejected and judged in absolute terms. The doctrine of election, however, lends itself to distortion into a form of self-assurance which could also lead to great hypocrisy in social mores. This hypocrisy, which is particularly notable in sexual attitudes, is the subject of Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer'. A perversion of the doctrine of election permits the supposedly 'elect' individual to commit sins without being in any way responsible or blameable.

The doctrine of election is of crucial significance in James Hogg's novel The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, as its title and form suggest. This work is more critical of Calvinism than is Adam Blair; Hogg's novel exposes the destructiveness of a 'submissiveness' which expresses itself, paradoxically, in assertive terms, and the hypocrisy of Calvinist attitudes to women, betrayed in part through the Sinner's own account.

Robert Wringhim expresses his hatred of women when he remarks:

> In this state of irritation and misery, was I dragging on an existence, disgusted with all around me, and in particular with my mother, who, with all her love and anxiety, had such an insufferable mode of manifesting them, that she had by this time rendered herself exceedingly obnoxious to me. The very sound of her voice at a distance, went to my heart like an arrow, and made all my nerves to shrink; and as for the beautiful young lady of whom they told me I had been so much enamoured, I shunned all intercourse with her or hers, as I would have done with the devil. [27]

27 James Hogg, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner: Written by himself: with a detail of curious traditionary facts, and other evidence, by the editor. (London, 1824), p. 281, referred to hereafter as Justified Sinner. Further references, to this edition, are given after quotations in the text.

The sexual overtones of 'intercourse' here cannot be missed, suggesting Robert's unacknowledged preoccupation with sex. His attitude to women clearly combines a mixture of attraction and disgust. The irony is, as we realize, although he does not, that it is the 'devil' who is encouraging his hatred of women, which leads to his 'shameful assault' on the young woman and the murder of his mother. Robert is unconscious of his crimes against women, and this illustrates how repression leads to a violent reaction; under the power of his subconscious, Robert seeks to destroy that which he is unable consciously to acknowledge.

However, the novel does not confine itself to criticism of Calvinism or the devil's party alone. It deals with the hypocrisy of society in its attitudes to women more generally as well. Some critics choose [28] to see the Laird of Dalcastle at the beginning as a somewhat 'healthy' life-giving character, an alternative to the repressions of his wife, and later of Robert. But, while the Laird is certainly not repressed, his marriage to a much younger woman, and his sexual importunings should be considered critically, despite the humorous tone. When the (admittedly unappealing) Mrs Dalcastle refuses to sleep with him, 'the laird regarded none of these testy sayings: he rolled her in a blanket, and bore her triumphantly away to his chamber, taking care to keep a fold or two of the blanket always rather near to her mouth, in case of any outrageous forthcoming of noise' (p. 11). When she runs home, it is only to be beaten by her angry father. It is clear that if Robert Wringhim's tortured

28 David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, p. 190. suggests such a view.

mind produces violence, other factions in society are not necessarily 'healthy' alternatives. The Laird of Dalcastle might be compared to the more likeable 'Last of the Lairds' in Galt's novel of that name, another remnant of the old Scottish aristocracy who exhibits a persistent and ultimately ludicrous lust for young women; both may represent the end of an old tradition of bawdy in Scotland which in Hogg's work is shown to be in its own way potentially contrary to the interests of women.

Hogg introduces further comment on society's hypocrisy and cruelty to women, through the character of Bell Calvert. Bell is a prostitute, but her pride and dignity make a mockery of conventional standards of 'morality', and show up her society's hypocrisy. Bell is in some ways reminiscent of Madge Wildfire, especially in her physical appearance. She is 'a tall emaciated figure, who appeared to have once possessed a sort of masculine beauty in no ordinary degree, but was now considerably advanced in years' (p. 88). As with Madge, Bell's lot in life represents her typically female predicament; but her 'masculine' appearance also suggests her strength. Although she is now a prostitute, it is implied she has fallen on hard times through ill-treatment by male society, and her role appears to offend her strong sense of integrity. Her account of her sufferings amplifies what we have already seen of attitudes towards women. She tells Mrs Logan that 'She had suffered every deprivation in fame, fortune, and person. She had been imprisoned; she had been scourged, and branded as an imposter; and all on account of her resolute and unmoving fidelity and truth to <u>several</u> of the very worst of men, every one of whom had abandoned her to utter destitution and shame' (p. 105). It is possible to argue that Bell exaggerates

or overdoes her self-pity, but there are many signs that women do indeed suffer much in this society. In relating her story to Mrs Logan, Bell says, '"I had been abandoned in York, by an artful and consummate fiend"' (p. 106), and the word 'fiend' reminds us of the way Robert has treated 'the beautiful young lady' and his own mother, while under the influence of the 'fiend'. Thus 'devilish' behaviour may be seen as being enacted in society at large.

In the light of this, and Bell Calvert's powerful appearance, I think it is misleading to over-emphasize her unreliability. Robert Kiely, for instance, ignores Bell's almost tragic dignity when he describes her thus:

> Events grow stranger as the narrative progresses, and when the crucial moment of the duel arrives, the "editor" removes himself and presents as his major witness, Bell Calvert, a whore, reputed to be "a swindler and imposter". As in the characterizations of the laird and his wife, Hogg looked to the eighteenth century for the prototype of this character and called upon the tradition of the talkative, good-natured prostitute who is more entertaining than accurate as a historian. Nonetheless, Bell Calvert is all we have for the moment, and we are forced to consider the events as she reports them. [29]

Kiely is trying to assimilate Bell into a tradition into which she simply does not fit. She is not merely 'talkative' and 'good-natured', and her attitude to society is much more critical than one would expect of the kind of one-dimensional character which Kiely would make of her. She is at once shrewd and bitter when she says to Mrs Logan, appealing to her as a woman, on the eve of her own expected death: '"I thought a woman would estimate a woman's and a mother's feelings, when such a dreadful throw was at stake, at least

29 The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), p. 220.

in part. But you are callous, and have never known any feelings but those of subordination to your old unnatural master"' (p. 90). Bell's role, like that of Madge Wildfire, is in itself an implicit criticism of conventional society, and the church; [30] but she is also articulate and independent.

Mrs Logan does respond to Bell's appeal, and joins forces with her, opposing Robert and his devilish companion. In their roles as persecutors of the man who has been so harmful to them, however, Bell and Mrs Logan become more problematic characters, and Hogg's attitude to them becomes more ambiguous. Bell Calvert's 'masculine' strength has until now manifested itself as dignity and self-possession, but although Bell and Arabella Logan are relatively 'sympathetic' characters, Hogg displays a certain fascination, even fear, in his presentation of their combined power. Robert tells Gil-Martin if he found Arabella Logan,'"I would tear her to pieces with my dogs, and feed them with her flesh"'(p. 132), but in fact it is the two women who get Robert in their power. Wringhim discovers Mrs Logan hiding in the bushes, and seizes her:

> The two women, when they heard what jeopardy they were in from such a wretch, had squatted among the underwood at a small distance from each other, so that he had never observed Mrs Calvert; but no sooner had he seized her benefactor, than, like a wild cat, she sprung out of the thicket, and had both her hands fixed at his throat, one of them twisted in his stock, in a twinkling. She brought him back-over among the brushwood, and the two, fixing on him like two harpies, mastered him with ease. (p. 135)

Robert once again reveals the full extent of his anti-female feeling, denouncing Bell and Mrs Logan as 'hags of the pit', as 'liars' and

30 Hogg attacks convention, both social and literary, elsewhere, for instance in 'Basil Lee', where the prostitute Clifford, from Inverness, is a sympathetic heroine; see The Works of the Ettrick Shepherd (Edinburgh, Glasgow and London, 1874), pp. 237-65.

'witches', 'creatures fitted from the beginning, for eternal destruction' (p. 136), and thus enlists our sympathy on behalf of the women. The image of the women 'squatting' in the bushes is an earthy one, however, difficult to reconcile with the image of the previously dignified Bell Calvert; and the description of her as a 'wild cat', and the two women as 'harpies', further indicates a certain ambiguity in the narrator's attitude. We should, of course, be aware that the narrator is not Hogg himself, but the 'editor', so that the ambiguity may be not Hogg's own; the editor has been seen to endorse a number of characters we might view more critically, such as the Laird, and George Dalcastle.

Nevertheless, the two women exercise their power: 'They mocked, they tormented, and they threatened him; but, finally, after putting him in great terror, they bound his hands behind his back, and his feet fast with long straps of garters which they chanced to have in their baskets' (p. 136). Although they show him mercy, their domination of Robert here is mirrored later in the scene where Robert becomes entangled in the weaver's loom, 'ma leddy's web' (p. 330), and is beaten by the half-naked man. Such ambiguous and quasi-sexual scenes of 'mastery' and 'domination', especially where women play the dominant role, illustrate a preoccupation with issues of power, expressed in sexual terms.

Hogg is writing from within the Scottish folk tradition, with its earthy attitudes to sex, and more explicit approach to physical matters. Like Burns, and Galt, he creates strong, sexual women capable of 'mastering' men, partly because such women exist in a

rural community, and are admitted to a literature which is written from within the traditions of that community.[31] Like Burns and Galt, and unlike most English writers, with their more middle-class conceptions of female roles, Hogg can create relatively 'liberated' and sometimes dominant women. Here, though, the apparent shift in Bell Calvert's role is confusing; from being a semi-tragic figure used to criticize her society, she becomes almost bawdy. Presumably she is being used in order to accommodate Hogg's shifting purpose, but it may also be that Hogg, aware and critical of the Calvinist tradition, was not himself entirely free from a preoccupation with some of the issues he also deals with more objectively. His fascination with the image of female 'mastery' may be a manifestation of the sense that female sexuality and power are fearsome, as Calvinism suggests.

We have so far seen few balanced and equal relationships of the sexes under Calvinism. One reason may lie in the continuing deterministic view of female sexuality, especially. Even in the work of a later writer, such as Stevenson, who appears to have rejected Calvinism, we find a fascination with the idea of female corruption. In Olalla the narrator draws back from his love for Olalla because he discovers the evil that is present in her family, although not in the girl herself. Although her brother is simple, it is the female line that is most corrupt. Olalla's mother is a vampire, and this fact haunts the narrator:

31 See also John Galt The Last of the Lairds; 'The Howdie' etc.

> All day I lay there. For a long time the cries of that nameless female thing, as she struggled with her half-witted whelp, resounded through the house, and pierced me with despairing sorrow and disgust. They were the death-cry of my love; my love was murdered; it was not only dead, but an offence to me; and yet, think as I pleased, feel as I must, it still swelled within me like a storm of sweetness, and my heart melted at her looks and touch. This horror that had sprung out, this doubt upon Olalla, this savage and bestial strain that ran not only through the whole behaviour of her family, but found a place in the very foundations and story of our love - though it appalled, though it shocked and sickened me, was not yet of power to break the knot of my infatuation. [32]

An obsession with vampirism and destructive female sexuality is, of course, a feature of much late nineteenth-century art. Kenneth Graham has commented, however, that here there may be a particularly Scottish dimension. He has drawn attention to the way in which Olalla is forced to look on her body as something apart from her soul, and this is the final horror of her self-alienation; her body is not her own, but has been handed on to her by her ancestors: 'The insistence throughout on the monstrousness of physical inheritance is strange and a little obsessive: as though the concepts of philosophic determinism and Calvinist pre-destination (the latter, at least, well known to Stevenson as a very personal and very national devil) have in this way taken physical form and limitation'. [33] It might be argued from this that Calvinist attitudes to female sexuality are very persistent. They may lie also behind the condemnation of women and their power to distract in, for instance, David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus. [34] Calvinism is certainly tied up with another recurrent subject in Scottish fiction: witchcraft.

32 'Olalla', The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, the Skerryvore Edition, in 30 vols (London, 1924), VII, pp. 174-5. All references to Stevenson's work are to this edition.

33 'Stevenson and Henry James: A Crossing', in Robert Louis Stevenson, edited by Andrew Noble (London and New Jersey, 1983), pp. 23-46 (p. 43)

34 See J.B. Pick, Colin Wilson and E.H. Visiak, The Strange Genius of David Lindsay (London, 1970), p. 42, on Lindsay's Calvinism.

IV

Female sexuality, as we have seen, can be very threatening to men; being a powerful and potentially 'masterful' force, it must be controlled. One outcome of the fear of what women seemed to represent was the persecution of women as witches, especially by the Church itself. In Scotland the persecution of witches seems to have been a virulent phenomenon, and the religious culture appears to have contributed to this. Calvin himself declared that 'the Bible teaches us that there are witches and that they must be slain... God expressly commands that all witches and enchantresses shall be put to death and this law of God is a universal law'.[35] Medieval Scotland had believed in saints, fairies and devils, but had not believed they could be controlled. The Reformation enforced a different outlook. With the coming of Protestantism it seems,

> The old neutrality became a moral impossibility, and a sincere minister or a fervent congregation became impelled to denounce the local witches: having tasted blood, denunciation became not an act of conscience (as it was at first) but a compulsive pleasure, the deep psychological grounds of which contemporaries were quite incapable of recognising either in themselves or in others. (pp. 200-1).

Witches were not persecuted only within Protestant societies, but it would appear that in Scotland around the Reformation such persecution became common. Certainly, Scottish fiction evidences a preoccupation with the idea of witchcraft, in which we find intensified the kinds of issues already looked at, presented with varying degrees of objectivity. Scott is fascinated by the idea of witchcraft; in Guy Mannering we are told of the character Sampson 'Born, indeed, at a

35 Quoted by T.C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830 (London, 1969), p. 200. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
See also Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843 : The Age of the Moderates (Edinburgh, 1973) pp. 12-13.

time when a doubt in the existence of witches was interpreted as equivalent to a justification of their infernal practices, a belief of such legends had been impressed upon the Dominie as an article indivisible from his religious faith, and perhaps it would have been equally difficult to have induced him to doubt the one as the other'.[36]

In The Bride of Lammermoor, as we saw, although the persecution of witches is shown to be a social rather than a supernatural phenomenon, the old women condemned as witches are presented as evil. Even in fiction written later in the nineteenth century, the social criticism engendered by the focus on the subject of witchcraft sometimes co-exists with an uneasy sense expressed by writers that there is something threatening about certain women.

In order to discuss some works which centre on the subject of witchcraft, it is necessary to understand that certain changes in the theological climate took place in the nineteenth century. The Scottish Church was riven by factionalism in the early part of the nineteenth century, and in 1843 was seriously split by the Disruption. This meant a weakening of the previously dominant Presbyterianism. The changes that came about seem to have been both theological and social. According to Henry Lord Cockburn, the end of the eighteenth century had seen very different manners from those prevalent in the decade before the Disruption:

> there was far more coarseness in the formal age than in the free one. Two vices especially, which have long been banished from all respectable society, were very prevalent, if not universal, among the whole upper ranks - swearing and drunkenness. Nothing was more common than for gentlemen who had dined with ladies and meant to rejoin them, to get drunk.[37]

36 Walter Scott, Guy Mannering (Border Edition, London, 1892), II, p. 194.

37 Drummond and Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843, p. 213, quoting from Henry Lord Cockburn Memorials of His Time (Edinburgh, 1856), pp. 26-7.

The new moderatism that was on the upsurge brought a change of manners along with a new theological outlook. Cockburn was ambivalent in his attitude to the new moderates, for he says that the typical moderate 'might be, and often was, a truly pious man; but he had nothing of the Solemn League and Covenant about him, and his clay was perfectly impervious to the deep and fervid spirit which is the soul of modern religion'. [38] On the other hand, while lacking fire and spirit, the moderates, he says, were in some ways 'greatly superior to their Wild brethren. Socially speaking, they were better fellows. They lived more with the gentry, and more in this world, and were more agreeable companions'. [39]

The 'moderate' minister is a recurrent fictional figure. At the same time, the old Calvinism is shown to have a powerful grip still on him, and this manifests itself in his attitudes to women, however 'enlightened' he may seem to be. We also find that some writers are themselves somewhat ambivalent in their attitudes to both the old Calvinism and its views, and the new moderatism, which may be more civilized but lacks 'fire', and again this ambivalence of attitude also extends to women. Despite a more sympathetic outlook, the old Calvinist view is sometimes evoked with a power which suggests it has not lost its grip, either on characters or their creators. This is the case in Stevenson's famous short story, 'Thrawn Janet'.

This story is actually set in the seventeenth century but the central theme is one which preoccupies nineteenth-century Scottish

38 Drummond and Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843, p. 265, quoting Lord Cockburn, pp. 289-91.

39 Drummond and Bulloch The Scottish Church 1688-1843, p. 265. quoting Lord Cockburn, pp. 289-91.

writers: the working of an older religious and superstitious outlook in a man - indeed a minister - who believes himself to be more liberal. The narrative technique in 'Thrawn Janet' distances us from the central protagonist, so that although the 'folk voice' of the story recounts the Reverend Soulis's experiences in an authoritative manner, we cannot be sure what has actually happened, as we are trapped within the superstitious outlook. Although we are given evidence that Janet is not 'sib to the de'il'[40], but an unfortunate woman who has borne an illegitimate child and been persecuted by the community as the minister initially insists, the narrative evokes Soulis's supernatural experience with such vividness that we are forced to share the sense of horror the woman has aroused, expressed by the 'folk' voice narrating the tale.

We are allowed to guess sympathetically at Janet's terrible isolation; women are often absent, alienated or isolated in Stevenson's fiction, like Mary isolated in the Calvinist atmosphere of The Merry Men, or Alison Graeme, opposed by the 'homespun' Presbyterian narrator MacKellar. We are allowed to guess at the way in which the minister's suspicion tips Janet into despair and suicide, and the story powerfully suggests both Soulis's fear, and his guilt at what has happened. Like so many other Calvinist men in Scottish fiction, he is deeply disturbed both by the woman's presence, and by what he has done to her. His name may suggest he is 'soulless'. Yet, while the story provides 'reasonable' explanations for what happens, and we can guess that much of the tale is sheer invention on the part of the folk, the enforcement of the limited viewpoint traps the reader into identifying with the superstitious view taken of the woman, and the tale almost too

40 'Thrawn Janet', Works vol VII, p. 124.

powerfully expresses the psychological horror she engenders.

J.M. Barrie's late tale, 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' deals with a similar subject. Again we find exploration of a mind cracking under the psychological strain imposed by aspects of Calvinism, although the theme of witchcraft is more objectively treated. 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' is narrated, like Hogg's Justified Sinner, through a first person form, here, a journal, which illustrates the self-centred and introverted nature of the protagonist, a Presbyterian minister. His account of events is clearly unreliable, and the tale again illustrates the effects of Calvinism working through an individual unaware of what is happening to him. His name and his remarks on it alert us to his nature: 'My name is the Rev. Adam Yestreen; and to be candid I care not for the Adam with its unfortunate associations'.[41] (p. 1). Adam is loath to admit the concept of sin, attached to his name, and this suggests that he is repressing his 'masculinity'; and he is clearly inexperienced with women. His exclusion from knowledge of women is emphasized by Joanna's tale. He is like Adam before the Fall, his innocence signified by the virginal whiteness of the snowy landscape.

This snow-bound world is also a stifling one. Although Adam appears to be a moderate, he represses his sexuality in a way initially enforced by the older kind of Calvinism, and as happens with Murdoch Soulis, his repression and isolation lead him to hallucinatory visions. His tormented subjectivity, although more humorously explored, can be compared with that of Adam Blair and Robert Wringhim. Julie Logan,

41 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan: A Wintry Tale', in a Supplement to The Times, Thursday, December 24, 1931, pp. 1-6 (p. 1). All references are to this, the first printed form of the story. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

the woman he imagines 'glides up a manse stair with what I take to be the lithesomeness of a panther' (p. 4), echoing the woman-panther imagery we find in MacDonald's Lilith; Julie is evidently vampirous. She is both 'glamorous' [42], the incarnation of Adam's sexual desires, and predatory, the representative of his fears.

While Julie Logan is the ambiguous projection of Adam's imagination, she is also associated with his fiddle. We learn that he has played the fiddle, but given it up; and his guilt about his continued urge to play is evident.

> When the English discovered how ashamed I was of my old backsliding with this instrument, they had the effrontery to prig with me to give them a tune, but I hope it is unnecessary for me to say that they had to retire discomfited. I have never once performed on the instrument here, though I may have taken it out of its case nows and nans to fondle the strings (p. 1).

The word 'fondle' suggests an analogy with still more 'dangerous' activities, which is drawn out further; Adam's fiddle falls into his arms as he opens the locked press, and he says, 'I had the queer notion that it clung to me. I could not compose myself till I had gone through my manse with the candle, and even after that I let my fiddle sleep with me' (p. 3). The link between the fiddle and Julie Logan is even more explicit at the end, when Adam remarks that his younger self 'thought he had catched into his arms something padding by, whose husky voice said "Adam" lovingly, the while her glamorous face snuggled into his neck, the way a fiddle does' (p. 6).

The implications are that Adam represses the creative side of himself, which is represented by the fiddle. A popular view of

42 Besides the more modern meaning of the word, Julie clearly exemplifies its older meaning, magical or eerie, cf. Scots 'glamourie'.

Calvinism sees it as repressing the creative and artistic instincts and denying pleasure, and although there are arguments refuting this,[43] it is an idea which has been much taken up by creative writers. Fionn Mac Colla puts forward the view of many modern Scottish writers when he says that Calvinism has run contrary to the interests of art in Scotland:

> Of course if the nature of man is totally and radically corrupt and evil, it followed as an ineluctable corollary that everything that emerges from that nature and is an expression of it, such as the whole creative life of man - such as specifically the entire body of the poetry, music and literature of the Gael - was in itself evil and therefore as a first priority requiring to be stamped out.[44]

Young Adam Yestreen, ostensibly a liberal, but still strongly Presbyterian, evidently represses both his sexuality and his creativity, and both repressions are symbolized in the image of the woman Julie Logan. She represents a paradox we have seen already: repression does not eradicate desire but leads only to its expression in some distorted form, or to a violent reaction. Adam's imagination and desires are so powerful as to 'master' him. Although he tries to rid himself of Julie Logan, symbol of all he seeks to forget, she haunts him always.

'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' explores the psychological disturbance of a man who has repressed several aspects of himself, and in this way it may be compared with other Scottish fictions of the nineteenth century and is indeed a witty comment on them. It is also, however, self-consciously a fable of national life, and Julie represents certain aspects of Scotland which have been suppressed. Julie is

43 For instance, M.P. Ramsay in Calvin and Art: Considered in Relation to Scotland (Edinburgh and London, 1938).

44 Foreword to The Albannach, (Edinburgh, 1971) pp. III-IV, reprinted from the first edition of 1932.

clearly associated with Scottish folk culture, having her ancestry in Burns's carline Nanny in 'Tam o' Shanter', and Hogg's poetic witches.[45] Like these and other rural women in Scottish fiction, she is assertive and sexual. Barrie makes a comment on Scottish literary traditions, and on Scottish culture, through Adam's reaction to her. Adam, like nineteenth-century Scotland, moves into the modern age, and the industrial world. Like many Scottish writers of this time, he looks back on the rural world from his new vantage point. In his new and civilized post in a mining town,' which in many ways, with its enterprise and modern improvements, including gas and carts to carry away any trifle of snow that falls, is far superior to my last charge ' (p. 6), he can try to forget Julie. Barrie thus comments on many writers who, writing from industrial parishes in the nineteenth-century wrote fiction (typically described as 'kailyard') that rigorously excluded the kind of sexuality represented by Julie and the earthy folk tradition. Adam's personality and attitudes echo the metaphorical associations forged originally by Scott; the past is dangerous and threatening, but, like female sexuality and superstition, and the power of art- enchanting. The present is safe but dull. Julie's name is linked with - perhaps suggested by - the Logan Stone:

> There are Logan Stones, I am told, throughout the world, and they are rocking stones. It is said they may be seen rocking in the wind, and that they never lose this property though with the centuries they wear small. Such a monster hangs out from our Eagles Rock, and you cannot reach the top save by climbing over it, nor can you get on to the Stone without leaping; and it is rounded as an egg. Twice men of the glen have leapt and it threw them off.

45 'Bonny Kilmeny' and 'the Witch O'Fife'. Another ghostly woman appears in Hogg's tale 'The Mysterious Bride' in The Works of the Ettrick Shepherd and recently reprinted in James Hogg, Selected Stories and Sketches edited by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 145-157.

The image of the Stone links the worlds of myth and history. The quality of stability in instability images forth the mind of man, inventing spectres; it suggests also the unassailable woman. But while Julie may be the mythic creation of the 'eternal' male imagination, she is also associated with Scottish history. Julie Logan, it is implied, is the Stranger who saved the Prince. This legend establishes her as a Jacobite and a Catholic, which she herself confirms. Julie and Adam may therefore be seen as symbolic figures also representing religious culture. Adam represents the Presbyterian church in nineteenth-century Scotland, becoming more moderate, but retaining aspects of the older faith; while Julie Logan is the Catholic church, disapproved of, and routed by, the Presbyterians in the Scottish Reformation. The Catholic Church was considered 'whorish' by the Presbyterians, initially for real reasons [46]; but the metaphoric sexual associations have become more significant in literary contexts. Smout points out that John Napier demonstrated that the Roman Church was the Scarlet Woman of the Book of Revelation (p. 186); and Mary Queen of Scots was of course presented as the incarnation of that figure by extreme Calvinists such as John Knox. 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' suggests that the Presbyterian mind is still, in the mid nineteenth century, haunted by all that it sees the Roman Catholic church as representing; it is both terrified and attracted. The ambiguous ending hints that although the Roman Church is ostensibly gone, stamped out by the Presbyterians, it is still there in spirit. The Presbyterian mind may repress the 'licentious' and the 'sensual', but it can never rid itself of an awareness of, and desire for, those things which it tries to ignore, or, in panic, destroy. It can also

46 See Smout, p. 57, on the licentious Roman clergy in Scotland. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

never rid itself of a haunting guilt. Adam tries to forget Julie Logan but the story itself testifies to the continued workings of his conscience.

Barrie explores the issues of Presbyterian sexuality and guilt more explicitly, objectively, and indeed humorously, than many previous writers. He exposes quite self-consciously the destructiveness of the Presbyterian attitude towards women, the dangers of sexual repression and male hypocrisy.[47] He offers, in miniature, a critical analysis of Scottish culture, its denials and fears. Nevertheless, while 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' is a superbly crafted fiction, the female role is limited by the story's thematic concern and its symbolic form. We are still trapped within male subjectivity, however self-deluding that subjectivity is shown to be; the female still does not have, as it were, an autonomous existence. The symbolic function of the female limits her potential for development, and this will continue to be true of Scottish fiction which is predominantly symbolic in form, and which assigns women particularly to symbolic roles.

Barrie's story, while limiting the role of the female, is pleasingly ambiguous and ironic in its presentation of the idea of the 'eternal feminine'. Barrie was in fact writing at a time when women were often characteristically shown as representing the 'eternal

47 See Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence : Culture's Revenge Against Nature, p. 18:

> 'The monks who wrote the Malleus Maleficarum as the doctrinal justification for witch-burning clearly created their descriptions of the ideas and acts of witches out of their own psyches, and afterwards attributed these fantasies to their victims...the witch never existed as the church saw her; rather, the Christian idea of the "witch" was a shadow side of that religious mind'.

feminine' in Scottish fiction by writers who were responding to significant changes that were taking place in the theological atmosphere. A new moderatism was having important effects on fiction, and on the representation of women. Buchan's Witch Wood which again deals with the subject of witchcraft, illustrates how a different theological emphasis - Buchan was Episcopalian - produces a different role for women in Scottish fiction. This novel [48] frameworks a seventeenth-century story within a modern one, again suggesting the refusal of the past to stay dead. The superstition and irrationality of the past have not retreated altogether. In the frameworked story, the central character is again a young liberal minister, David Sempill, who confronts the wood Melanudrigill. Its curious name suggests the essentially symbolic nature of this wood, which represents the darkness and fear of superstition fostered by a strongly Calvinist society. David's confrontation of the forces involves a powerful moral challenge, but the wood also contains 'Paradise', where David meets the girl Katrine. She represents the reverse side of superstition. The woman now has a positive function; rather than being associated with witchcraft, she is one of the forces which oppose it. Katrine is portrayed as innocent, a type of pre-Reformation goodness, and achieves almost Christ-like status in her death, a martyr to the community. However, while the female character here has an important and sympathetic role, it is one which is limited by the somewhat whimsical and sentimental tone of the presentation.

The more 'positive' role assigned to the woman is one which becomes more common from now on. Writers identify, with increasing

48 John Buchan, Witch Wood (London, 1927).

objectivity, the ways in which Presbyterian culture oppresses women socially because of their sexuality and the link made between them and the notion of sin. We saw in 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' that a female figure is symbolically associated with other aspects of life which writers see as being oppressed by Calvinism, such as creativity, and a growing reaction against Calvinism also leads to a new emphasis on that which it is seen to oppress, both actually and symbolically: the 'feminine', which is usually however, limited and sentimentalized.

Barrie himself was writing at a time when a new moderatism was changing attitudes, and his most famous works feature a strikingly characteristic figure in Scottish fiction of this time : the mother. Historical forces lie behind the inflation of the 'feminine', and especially the mother figure: there are many cultural pressures, such as the nostalgia for the 'motherland' which was experienced by Scottish writers in 'exile', and the exploitation of nostalgia suffered by readers themselves exiled from their homeland of Scotland [49] is a feature of much nineteenth-century Scottish writing. The significance of the changing theological climate particularly cannot be ignored. The disintegration of the unity of the Scottish church leads to a tendency to promote images of continuity, offered by writers willing to give the Scottish reading public the reassurance it needed; and the image of the woman, especially the mother, is used to promote ideas of unity, emotional warmth and security, and ultimately, political conservatism in relation to the woman's role in society.

The female figure of this kind is not merely used to gloss over change and social insecurity. In many cases, such as that of George

49 See David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, Chapter 9, 'Emigration', pp 273-293, for more about this.

MacDonald, the woman is used as a means of putting across a theological and social message; instead of enforcing a strict Calvinist moral, authors now seek to convey a liberal vision. In some cases, of course, we find ambiguity of attitude. MacDonald, for instance, does not make a clean break with the past. Nevertheless, certain general tendencies are clearly observable in the fiction, and in order to understand these better, it is necessary to take a closer look at the new liberal theology.

V

A characteristic challenge to traditional Calvinism was made by Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, who was of Episcopalian background, and articulated certain critical attitudes to Calvinism typically found amongst those rebelling against extreme Presbyterianism. Thomas Erskine is said to have commented that:

> Calvinism makes God and the thought of him all in all, and makes the creature almost as nothing before Him. So it engenders a deep reverence, a profound humility and self-abasement, which are the true beginnings of all religion. It exalts God infinitely above the creature. In this Calvinism is true and great, and I honour it. What I cannot accept is its conception of God as One in Whom power is the paramount attribute, to which a loving righteousness is made quite subordinate, and its restriction of the love of God in a way which seems to me not righteousness but partiality. [50]

This objection to the Calvinist emphasis on sin, punishment and power is articulated by many thinkers and writers in this period; and there is a new stress on the importance of love. There is a movement away also from the stress on Scriptural conformity and theological

50 Drummond and Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843, p. 195, quoting J. C. Shairp, Reminiscence of Thomas Erskine, in Thomas Erskine, Letters, ii, (Edinburgh 1877-8), p. 381.

discussion, and this arguably slackens the intellectual life of Scotland. Victorian literature notably tends towards piety and sentimentality, of course, but in Scotland the reaction against Calvinism and the growth of a new emotionalism may have brought about a particularly significant flowering of these phenomena. In Scotland the female characters who are used to symbolize 'love' are also often particularly associated with national identity.

Erskine, an influential figure, felt that faith meant not only acceptance of doctrine, but was a spiritual condition. He stressed the significance of Christ, who should be seen as an exemplar and as a source of hope. Rather than emphasizing Christ's death as a punishment for mankind's sins, as Calvinism tended to do, Erskine believed we should see the Christ in every man. Repudiating the notion of 'eternal punishment', Erskine reinterpreted scripture to emphasize the links between Christ and humankind, and the ultimate unity of all things: 'Erskine thought in terms of the community of mankind. He returned to the Scriptural thought of Christ as the Second Adam, the head of a new and redeemed humanity'.[51] Thus Erskine's is a more optimistic vision than the Calvinist one, although even as he wrote, there were still preachers warning of the tortures of hell awaiting sinners. Erskine felt such messages were dangerous and wrong; and his opposition to the hell-fire brigade was taken up by McLeod Campbell, who, indebted to Erskine, wrote a systematic exposition of his beliefs, rejecting some previous Calvinist theories: 'He was deeply dissatisfied with those penal theories in which

51 Drummond and Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843, p. 196. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Calvinists like Ralph Wardlaw had discussed the doctrine in legal terms. By contrast, he set out to consider it, not in the light of the divine justice, but in terms of God's love' (p. 209).

The new optimism, the emphasis on redeemed humanity, on God's love and on the unity of all things, are all significant in the formation of the fictional images of women characteristically found in the mid and later nineteenth century in Scotland. One of the most interesting writers to be influenced by the new liberal theology is George MacDonald. MacDonald came of a Presbyterian family, but, as a young man, rebelled against orthodox Calvinism, and resisted what he called 'finished, well-polished, sharp-edged systems'.[52] MacDonald did enter the Church, however, and his fiction almost invariably has a Christian didactic purpose. This is one reason for his adoption of the symbolic 'fable' or 'parable' mode, which his son describes as 'the mode of his Master' (p. 296). Yet if a deeply felt religious faith lies behind his work, it is not strictly speaking Calvinism- although its influence remains - but a faith fed by the liberal ideas current at the time. MacDonald's career suffered because of his religious heterodoxy; he even lost his ministry at one point because he was seen to be 'corrupted' by German theology. MacDonald was turning away from the native Scottish traditions, and inclined to 'a mystical optimism associated with the Romantics'.[53] German Romantic writers were formative in MacDonald's vision, especially Novalis, whose songs MacDonald translated. Many major

52 Greville MacDonald, George MacDonald and his Wife (London, 1924), p. 155, quoting MacDonald in a letter to his father, dated April 15th, 1851. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

53 George Elder Davie, The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and Her Universities in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 326. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Scottish thinkers of this period shared these interests. As George Elder Davie has pointed out, the monistic German philosophy congenial to Romantic thought, 'alien as it was to the majority, now at last in the 'fifties and 'sixties began to make some headway among those who, for one reason or another, were in revolt against the educational and spiritual tradition' (p. 326). Rather than arguing as one critic does, that 'MacDonald lived a life of almost total isolation from his intellectual and social milieu' [54], whose works are correspondingly obscure and unlike any others of his time, we should be aware of the similarities between MacDonald's thinking and that of many of his Scottish contemporaries in the Church and universities. His education at Aberdeen University, where he studied both science and arts, must have introduced him to the intellectual currents of his time, and these contemporary ideas are apparent in his fiction.

In his 'realistic' Scottish novels, George MacDonald characteristically traces the religious 'Bildung' of his heroes, as he does, for instance, in Robert Falconer. The central character in this is illustrative of MacDonald's theological liberalism. MacDonald commented: 'Those who are in the habit of regarding the real and the ideal as essentially and therefore irreconcilably opposed, will remark that I cannot have drawn the representation of Falconer faithfully'. [55] Robert is shown striving towards the Christlike, so that the novel suggests the ideal that is potentially in 'everyman' rather than focusing on the fallen nature of humanity.

54 Colin Manlove, The Impulse of Fantasy Literature (London and Basingstoke, 1983), p. 73.

55 Quoted by Hart, The Scottish Novel, p. 101, from Robert Falconer (London, 1927), p. 396. All my references are to this single volume edition of the novel (first published in 1868).

An important aspect of Robert's education in life is represented by his encounters with various characters, and several women play a significant role. The grandmother is a recurring figure in MacDonald's work, partly because of his interest in fairy tales. In his fiction, she characteristically represents the 'female' heritage of wisdom, imagination and emotion. The grandmother in the Curdie stories is a figure of Fate, as is suggested by her spinning wheel and the thread of Destiny she hands on to the young princess. While this grandmother figure is a great reconciler, representing the fusion of past and present, old and young, beauty and wisdom, the grandmother in Robert Falconer represents a rather different heritage, the repressiveness of Scottish Calvinism:

> she had never been so actively severe towards Robert as she had been towards her own children. To him she was wonderfully gentle for her nature, and sought to exercise the saving harshness which she still believed necessary, solely in keeping from him every enjoyment of life which the narrowest theories as to the rule and will of God could set down as worldly. Frivolity, of which there was little in this sober boy, was in her eyes a vice; loud laughter almost a crime; cards and novelles, as she called them, were such in her estimation, as to be beyond my powers of characterization. [56]

MacDonald was imaginatively concerned with Scotland, and we find in Sir Gibbie, for instance, the idea that true identity involves a search for 'roots' and a recognition of origins. Northrop Frye cites MacDonald as a writer notably conscious of his national heritage: '"In addition to the Bible", says George MacDonald, each nation possesses a Bible .... in its history"'. [57] Calvinism is a part of

56 Robert Falconer, p. 60. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

57 Quoted in The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1978), p. 8. Frye does not give a source for the quotation.

the Scottish heritage, here personified by Mrs Falconer. She is an interestingly ambiguous figure, whose appearance suggests her nature:

> A clear but short-sighted eye of a light hazel shone under a smooth, thoughtful forehead; a straight and well-elevated, but rather short nose, which left the firm upper lip long and capable of expressing a world of dignified offence, rose over a well-formed mouth, revealing more moral than temperamental sweetness; while the chin was rather deficient than otherwise, and took little share in indicating the remarkable character possessed by the old lady (p. 31).

Mrs Falconer is characterized as generally noble, but not warm and loving. Her Calvinist nature is repressive; 'She was the all-seeing eye personified- the eye of the God of the theologians of his country, always searching out the evil, and refusing to acknowledge the good' (p. 152).

Mrs Falconer partly represents the negative aspects of Calvinism; and these are shown as opposed to more positive qualities which are usually symbolized by MacDonald as the 'true' feminine. Robert has been starved of affection, for instance:

> He had no recollection of ever being kissed. From the darkness and negation of such an embryo-existence, his nature had been unconsciously striving to escape- struggling to get from below ground into the sunlit air- sighing after a freedom he could not have defined, the freedom that comes, not of independence, but of love- not of lawlessness, but of the perfection of law. (pp. 76-7)

Robert has not had affection from his grandmother, and seeks fulfilment from his violin, first of all, for, MacDonald says, 'He had not yet arrived at the point when the feminine assumes its paramount influence, combining in itself all that music, colour, form, odour, can suggest, with something infinitely higher and more divine' (p. 72). Once he discovers the power of the 'feminine', Robert aspires

to Mary St John, who is, like Julie Logan, linked with the violin, which is characterized as female. Mrs Falconer burns Robert's violin and blocks the door which was his passage to Mary, whose name is surely significant. Thus Calvinism tries to cut off the 'feminine'. The 'feminine' here is, in its earthly form, only a substitute for, or rather, means to, realizing the higher truth, which is in God. Nevertheless, it is of great importance. Although Robert searches for his father, the stress in MacDonald's work is often on the search for the mother, and this has symbolic force. MacDonald believes 'There is no type so near the highest idea of relation to God, as that of the child to his mother. Her face is God, her bosom Nature, her arms are Providence- all love- one love- to him an undivided bliss'.[58] Thus it is obvious that the image of women, especially the mother figure, in MacDonald's work often illustrates his theological belief in the importance of Divine Love. MacDonald also stresses the importance of imagination, which he again characterizes as female and which he claims as of central importance, in science, and especially in poetry: 'In the scientific region of her duty of which we speak, the Imagination cannot have her perfect work; this belongs to another and higher sphere than that of intellectual truth- that, namely, of full-globed humanity, operating in which she gives birth to poetry- truth in beauty'.[59] His metaphorical use of gender is illustrated again less abstractly when he claims that Lady Macbeth's great failure lay in denying her imagination and thus her 'true womanhood' (pp. 30-32). The imagination (and thus 'femininity') is a significant moral force. The idea of imagination as feminine, and

58 'A Sketch of Individual Development', in Orts (London, 1882), pp. 43-76 (p.44)

59 'The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture', in Orts, pp. 1-42 (pp.14-15 Further references are given after quotations in the text.

as a force superior to intellect alone, is not new or unique to MacDonald, of course; it is quintessentially Romantic. The idea of morality being under the guardianship of women is also very Victorian. However, in MacDonald's work, his intense engagement with these ideas is due, I suggest, to his reaction against Scottish Calvinism. 'Femininity' in its 'true' form, as defined by MacDonald, is shown to be superior to the forms of organized religion, and the academic achievements fostered by Presbyterianism. [60] We see this in Alec Forbes of Howglen, where Annie Anderson is shown to be spiritually superior to the old Scots dominie Malison and the established minister Cowie, who are both in their own ways repressive.

In his fantasy works, MacDonald's emphasis on the idea of 'femininity' is even more central than in any of the 'Scottish' novels. MacDonald's theological interests and sympathies are apparent in these fantasy works in a number of significant ways. His theological liberalism may indeed contribute to his very adoption of the fantasy mode. The sort of outlook expressed in the teachings of Edward Caird, for instance, might well lend itself to a rendering through romance or fantasy types of fiction:

> Caird....aimed at putting over an optimistic view of human historical prospects which would stand in marked contrast to the realistic and pessimistic estimates of man's situation, already familiar to the students from his colleagues' teaching and from Scottish tradition generally. He thus 'placed his students from the beginning at a point of view whence the life of mankind would be contemplated as one movement, single though infinitely varied, unerring though wandering' according to which somehow, rather mysteriously, everything would come right in the end. [61]

60 See Davie for an account of the relationship between Scottish Presbyterianism and the academic tradition. The rather arid schoolteacher is a character recurring in later fiction also, for instance, Margaret Inverary in George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe.

61 Davie, p. 329.

In accordance with such views as these, MacDonald is most attracted to, and skilled in, the forms of fantasy and romance, where characters may be simplified and the exteriors of the 'real' world ignored in favour of concentration on the 'essentials'.

Both Phantastes and Lilith feature the 'quest' of a central protagonist, whose experiences are fantastic but are analogues of experience in the 'real' world. Anodos and Vane journey through emotional and spiritual landscapes and encounters, and although the Scottish scene may seem to have been left behind, these works comment on it indirectly. Douglas Gifford has commented that The Golden Key 'is a sort of pilgrim's progress through life, an allegory which stresses the need for charity and love, qualities too lacking in nineteenth-century Scottish life'. [62] Gifford remarks that the parable form used by other Scottish writers 'seems to be yet another oblique method whereby the Scottish writer expresses his hunger for imaginative freedom and human warmth and, by implication, comments on the society which lacks these qualities' (p. 11). As we have seen these are, according to MacDonald, 'feminine' qualities. MacDonald prefaces chapter XXV of Phantastes with a quotation from Novalis, translated as 'our life is no dream; but it ought to become one and perhaps will'. [63] By living imaginatively we may perhaps make the world closer to ideal; but until we recognize the importance of imagination - which is 'feminine' - we will not do so.

62 Introduction to Scottish Short Stories 1800-1900, edited by Douglas Gifford (London, 1971), p. 11. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

63 George MacDonald, Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women (London, 1858), p. 318. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

As in Robert Falconer, the idea of the imaginative inheritance in Phantastes is embodied in the grandmother figure. Anodos, whose name means 'pathless, wandering', has an ancestry of which he is only in part aware. His grandmother tells him. '"I dare say you know something of your great grandfathers a good deal further back than that; but you know very little about your great grandmothers on either side"' (p. 7). The grandmother's, or female, lineage, is associated with 'Fairyland', which is, in turn, associated with images of the sea, a traditional 'female' medium, fertile, but also, as we will see, destructive. Anodos is told by a woman he meets on his journey that, like her, he has fairy blood (p. 17). Later, he stays with a family whose attitudes are divided; the man scoffs at the idea of Fairyland, but the woman believes in it (chapter VII, pp. 80-91). This typifies the polarization of male and female attitudes. Fairyland does exist, for Anodos goes on to experience it, and we should therefore give more credence to our 'female' selves. Fairyland can be seen to represent that imaginative, 'feminine' life which MacDonald believes we repress.

The landscape of Phantastes is 'feminine', and 'pre-Lapsarian'. It is 'a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon, and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery'.[64] The specifically Edenic aspect of this world is suggested by the quotation appended to Chapter X, 'From Eden's bowers the full-fed rivers flow...'. There are often references to 'Mother Earth', and the restorative power of nature: 'Now that I lay in her bosom, the whole earth, and each of her many births, was as a

64 Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 200.

body to me, at my will' (p. 314). This 'female' world is an essentially benevolent one, and the end of Phantastes holds out hope, 'A great good is coming' (p. 322). The disembodied female voice reminds Anodos of the woman in the woods in chapter XIX; it is also perhaps the voice of the beech tree. It is implied that these two characters are one and the same. Together they represent 'the eternal feminine', sharing the vital quality of 'wise tenderness' (p. 322). They reconcile apparent opposites, being both old and young, both nature and woman (a tree), and thus offer a resolution of conflict. This female image of reconciliation occurs again in At the Back of the North Wind. Diamond notices that North Wind has a voice that is both high and low, and, when they are out in the storm, 'It seemed to Diamond likewise that they were motionless in this centre, and that all the confusion and fighting went on around them' [65]. Although North Wind is powerful Diamond tells her '"I can't trust myself so well as when I'm in your arms"' (p. 81). The maternal protective love offered by many of these female fantasy figures is symbolic of the kind of ideal Christian love that MacDonald, from his liberal theological standpoint, saw as of great importance, in contrast to the more repressive and judgemental attitudes promoted by Calvinism. The female 'characters' in these fictions are not, of course really female at all, but symbols of values which MacDonald wished to put forward.

While the woman represents the 'great good' that is at the heart of MacDonald's vision, the woman, in true romance tradition, also represents evil. In Phantastes, White Lady is also the Alder Maiden

65 At the Back of the North Wind (London, 1871), p. 75. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

who appears and disappears in Chapter VI disturbingly posing the problem of the deceptive attractiveness of evil. The opposition between MacDonald's concept of 'true' maternal, protective femininity and distracting evil is found most powerfully in Lilith, where the original family of Adam and Eve is the symbol of unity and love, reversing the Calvinist emphasis on Original Sin; and the challenge to this harmony is presented by Adam's first wife, the evil Lilith.

Rather than being, like the 'true' feminine, loving and giving, Lilith wants adoration of herself. MacDonald's condemnation of this stems in part from his religious outlook. The Christian- and Calvinist- conception of sacrifice emphasizes submissiveness, and this Lilith refuses to acknowledge. MacDonald may illustrate a lingering Calvinist view here, but the emphasis on submission is also in accord with his liberal outlook. His anti-intellectuality is an aspect of his liberal and Romantic vision; like D.H. Lawrence, MacDonald preaches that too much self-consciousness prevents the individual getting in touch with his or her 'true' self. To achieve integration, the 'self' should be abandoned. Since the woman is for MacDonald representative of a greater degree of unselfconsciousness, emotional values, and instinctive wisdom, the woman who is self-assertive is, in his view, denying her femininity. For these reasons, Lilith must be condemned or converted to 'true' femininity. Mr Raven (Adam) says 'even Lilith shall be saved by her childbearing' [66] Lilith's lack of love for her daughter, and the troop of children searching for mothers, suggest the desperate implications of Lilith's abrogation of the mother's role. Not until she loses her dead closed fist, yields

66 George MacDonald, Lilith: A Romance (London, 1895), p. 205. All further references are to this edition.

herself up and acknowledges her 'femininity' can the rivers of the land run, and fertility be restored.

It is notable also that Lilith was published at a time when threatening female figures were a recurring feature of art and literature, suggesting male responses to new female demands for a change in women's roles in society. Lilith may be seen in this context as a rebuke to the 'new Woman', and an attempt to reassert ideas of traditional 'femininity'. This idea is reinforced when one considers MacDonald's other writings:

> Let women who feel the wrongs of their kind teach women to be high-minded in their relation to men, and they will do more for the social elevation of women, and the establishment of their rights, whatever those rights may be, than by any amount of intellectual development or assertion of equality. Nor, if they are other than mere partisans, will they refuse the attempt because in its success men will, after all, be equal, if not greater gainers, if only thereby they should be "feelingly persuaded" what they are. [67]

From this it can be seen that MacDonald's insistence on the supposedly 'feminine' values is bound up with a generally reactionary attitude to female roles in society. Although MacDonald's liberal theology may seem superficially to be sympathetic to women, its emphasis on the centrality of emotions, of passivity and self-abnegation, conspires with existent Romantic images and current attitudes to promote not only a limited fictional role for women, but a conservative social role as well.

While the background of liberal theology contributes importantly to the dominant image of a submissive and 'loving' femininity, there

67 'The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture', Orts, p. 34.

are ambiguities in MacDonald's images of women which also suggest the retention of some Calvinist ideas. The figure of Lilith like other female vampire figures of the time is doubtless created partly as a reaction to feminist challenges; but the influence of Calvinism may be significant as well. Rosemary Jackson has noted the striking equation of 'female sexuality with immorality' [68] in MacDonald's work. Lilith's assertive sexuality is both powerfully evoked and violently condemned. The narrator, Vane, describes himself when Lilith comes to him in the night as 'a human fountain for a thirst demoniac!' (p. 184), and her sexual power is described with fin-de-siècle sensuousness: 'No pain! -ah, what a shoot of mortal pain was that! what a sickening sting! It went right through my heart! Again! That was sharpness itself! - and so sickening! I could not move my hand to lay it on my heart; something kept it down!' (p. 183). Although MacDonald rejected Calvinism, he retained, perhaps, the Calvinist consciousness of concupiscence, and yet also the Calvinist need to reject it in the strongest possible terms. The punishment of Lilith is presented with striking vividness, and is singularly unpleasant.

While MacDonald's work is often placed in the mainstream of Victorian fantasy writing, it has been noted that both MacDonald and his contemporary Kingsley offer a vision of considerable complexity: Jackson remarks, 'their embrace of Platonic idealism was less of a transcendental movement, and more of a displacement of psychological and social issues, for their fantasies betray a dissatisfaction with their own idealism' (p. 146). Certainly, the ambiguities of

68 Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (London and New York, 1981), p. 150. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

MacDonald's fiction are notable, and may be attributable to the interaction of MacDonald's liberal outlook with his native Calvinism, and with current attitudes to women. Although MacDonald's work displays this kind of complexity, fiction from this time onward illustrates on the whole the decline of Calvinism, and the increased strength of the new moderatism.

VI

One result of the way in which Calvinism was losing its grip was the growing popularity of sentimental fiction which substituted religiosity for concern with doctrinal clarity. This sentimental literature includes the work of writers such as 'Ian Maclaren', J.M. Barrie, S.R. Crockett, and, although she is less often included in critical discussions, Annie S. Swann. This writing, like that of MacDonald, is usefully seen against the background of liberal theology, and in the context of a Scotland which was undergoing the vitiation of its national life on all fronts.

The purpose of the so-called 'kailyard' fiction is to offer a liberal vision, 'to help implant, in rather stony soil, a religion, heterodox and humanistic', in contrast to the previously dominant Calvinism'. [69] It is also intended to 'moderate the intestine hatreds of religious politics in Scotland'. (p. 65) As well as offering a vision of the compassion of God and essential goodness of humanity, this fiction seeks to present an image of unity, where there had been strife. The church had been undergoing severe

69 Christopher Harvie, 'Behind The Bonnie Brier Bush: "The Kailyard" Revisited', Proteus, 3 (June 1978), 55-70 (p. 65). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

difficulties, with the Disruption in 1843 and subsequent fragmentation. There were also growing threats to religion from such new ideas as Darwinism, and in Scotland the traditional framework of society, and the sense of national identity in which the church had played so important a part, were breaking down, with the growth of industrialism and the development of communications. Isolated rural communities were breaking up, and the fabric of life was acquiring a new texture.

In this uncertain climate, fiction which offered reassuring images could secure a hold for itself, and achieve some commercial success. Ian Maclaren's tales of Drumtochty are a characteristic example of 'kailyard' fiction. The product of a writer who was actually a minister, they offer idealized images of village life in a Scotland which was rapidly vanishing, and which would appeal to the nostalgic Scot abroad, or to the alienated city dweller. There are elements in this fiction which cannot be dismissed as merely escapist; for instance the way in which Drumtochty straddles Highland and Lowland is typical of some Scottish communities. However, sentimentality and idealization are characteristic of this work. Women are represented in certain stereotypic roles, which, as in the case of MacDonald, are intended to put over a theological message, but are extremely restricted. Women are almost invariably shown in the role of mother and comforter; sexuality is completely absent, and unpleasant truths about social hardship or limitation are ignored.

A scene which illustrates well the role of women in kailyard fiction is the scene in Maclaren's Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush where

George Howe is dying. He remembers the occasion when he encountered a Revival man:

> "I was only a wee laddie, and I did what we all do in trouble, I cried for my mother.
> "Ye hae na forgotten, mither, the fricht that was on me that night." "Never," said Marget, "and never can; it's hard wark for me to keep frae hating that man, dead or alive. Geordie gripped me wi' baith his wee airms round my neck, and he cries over and over and over again, 'Is yon God?'
> "Ay, and ye kissed me, mither, and ye said (it's like yesterday), 'Yir safe with me,' and ye telt me that God micht punish me to mak me better if I was bad, but that he wud never torture ony puir soul, for that cud dae nae guid, and was the Devil's wark. ye asked me:
> "'Am I a guid mother tae ye?' and when I could dae naethin' but hold, ye said, 'Be sure God maun be a hantle kinder.'
> "The truth came to me as with a flicker, and I cuddled down into my bed, and fell asleep in His love as in my mother's arms. "Mither," and George lifted up his head, "that was my conversion and, mither dear, I hae longed a' thro' thae college studies for the day when ma mooth wud be opened wi' this evangel." [70]

The identification of God's love with a mother's love, in contrast to the threatening quality of Calvinist rhetoric, is similar to that which we saw in MacDonald's work. The problem in approaching such a passage is not really that, as Harvie tells us [71], it is factually unlikely that a mother would have this kind of independent religious influence on her son. The problem is rather that the mother's role here is never expanded beyond this, and the sentimental tone limits our responses.

In Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush the mother's role is exalted and endowed with a numinous religiosity. Marget's garden is compared to Gethsemane and she is said to have 'the dignity of Our Lady of Sorrows' (p. 46). Some of the kailyard writers almost instate the woman in terms of Catholic iconology, something unimaginable in

70 'Ian Maclaren' Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush (London, 1894), pp. 36-7.

71 Harvie, 'Behind the Bonnie Brier Bush', p. 63.

traditional Calvinism. Indeed, in Scotland in the late nineteenth century, the writer 'Fiona Macleod' turned to Catholicism. Of course, many Victorians did so, for confused reasons, identifying Catholicism with a greater degree of ceremony and aesthetic and emotional appeal than other religions. For William Sharp, as for the kailyard writers, it was a faith which represented all that Calvinism appeared to deny: 'The veneration of Mary, which some spokesmen for the rational Protestant mind termed Mariolatry and censured as a degradation of man's spiritual instincts, began to appear to Sharp as the means by which man expressed his persistent craving for a maternal spirit in which to submerge himself, a craving that reformed religions were wrong to deny'. [72]

Despite the inflation of the mother figure in kailyard fiction, however, the woman's estate is essentially limited. In Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush we are told that 'Marget's was an old-fashioned garden, with pinks and daisies and forget-me-nots, where nature had her way, and gracious thoughts could visit one without any jarring note' (p. 37). The emotions associated with Marget are, like her flowers, tame and domestic ones. She is associated with nature, as women often are, but it is a safe, limited nature, with nothing threatening about it. Even Marget's thoughts are 'gracious'. Thus we see how the range allowed to the female character is extremely limited. Moderatism in religion brought a greater degree of surface 'sympathy' for the idea of the woman, but female characters in fiction are still very circumscribed, and their limited role may be seen - as in MacDonald's work - as promoting a politically

72 Flavia Alaya, William Sharp- "Fiona Macleod" 1855-1905 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), p. 165.

conservative role for women in society.[73] The image of society which this fiction presents has stimulated much criticism. Maclaren focuses on rural communities at a time when Scotland is rapidly becoming urbanized. This is not mere naiveté; for, as Harvie comments, the assumption of such fiction is that 'although the millstones of class and the cash-nexus might grind in the great world, creating anomie, the Gemeinschaft of local society still could provide a " sense of community "'.[74] It is difficult to say, however, where propaganda ends and dishonesty begins. Certainly, serious writers since the 'kailyard' have objected to the falsifying of an often harsh reality, and the commercial exploitation of Scotland which it involved.

The idea of the 'community' is central to kailyard fiction, and there is a key female presence in Maclaren's village. Although most of the characters in the Drumtochty tales are male, one character comments that '"Margaret Hoo is nearer the hert o' things than onybody in the Glen"'.[75] 'Hert' here, as in The Heart of Midlothian (although these works are not otherwise comparable) implies a number of things; that Marget is a crucial, central figure in the community, and also that the values of the community, embodied in her, are ones of emotional warmth, co-operation and kindliness. Instead of focusing on a central family unity, Ian Maclaren shows society as one big happy family. When Marget Howe's son dies, Drumsheugh tells her

73 For a fuller discussion of the links between 'gentility' and religious moderatism in Scotland, see David Daiches, Literature and Gentility in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 70-71.

74 Harvie, 'Behind the Bonnie Brier Bush', p. 68.

75 Ian Maclaren, The Days of Auld Langsyne (London, 1895), p. 275.

that "there's juist ae heart in Drumtochty and it's sair"'. [76] A young man distinguishes himself at university and reaches academic heights, and his father is told by another member of the community 'Div ye think, Bogleigh, that the Professor belongs tae yersel' noo an' the gudewife....juist as if he were some ordina' man? Na, na... that laddie belangs tae Drumtochty"'. [77] When Flora Campbell tries to leave the community, she is shown returning home, to forgive her harsh Calvinist father whose severity has driven her away. Thus an element of social criticism is ultimately subjugated to the main purpose of the fiction: to portray a reassuring image of a society united and harmonious - as no Scottish society could ever entirely be, of course. Other traditional aspects of Presbyterian life are preserved in the fiction, such as the respect for academic achievement which is often seen as typically Presbyterian. Yet the less attractive aspects of the subject are again glossed over. When George Howe dies, we are told: 'His peasant mother stood beside the body of her scholar son, whose hopes and thoughts she had shared, and through the window came the bleating of distant sheep. It was the idyll of Scottish university life'. [78] The scene itself takes what Maclaren considered to be representative 'types' in Scottish society, and the death of the 'lad o'pairts' probably was all too frequent an event in nineteenth-century Scotland. The word 'idyll', however, betrays the superficiality of Maclaren's treatment of potentially disturbing subject matter. This is a death scene, and to describe it as an idyll is to glorify the waste of young life through poverty and hardship. Maclaren cannot allow it to become too distressing a

76 Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, p. 49.

77 The Days of Auld Langsyne, p. 218.

78 Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, p. 44.

scene, for this fiction is intended to entertain and reassure, but it is also for his purposes worth cultivating a degree of emotionalism. Sadly the kailyard rules never permit any deeper exploration of the issues latent in the material.

This rule applies to the representation of women. Marget is described as a 'peasant' woman, but we never see her at work, although in life she would certainly have worked and probably had to sacrifice a great deal to send her son to university. She is actually presented almost as a Victorian middle-class woman, and this falsification leads to the portrayal, in later fiction, of over-worked, self-sacrificing peasant and working-class mothers, intent on helping their sons to get on, and usually out of the local community, images which are posited in response to the idealized and sentimentalized depiction of women's roles in the kailyard.

Not all kailyard fiction conforms to the same formula. Some works described as 'kailyard' are more interesting than others. J.M. Barrie is the most interesting and important of the 'kailyard' writers. A Window in Thrums, for instance, is at once more complex and more ambiguous in effect than most of Maclaren's work. It also has at its centre a mother figure. Jess's hand is 'a worn old hand that had many a time gone out in love and kindness when younger hands were cold', [79] and like Maclaren's mother figures, Barrie's 'Jess' is intended to provide an emotionally reassuring picture of Scotland governed by the values of liberal theology. There is an ambiguity

79 A Window in Thrums, The Works of J.M. Barrie, the Kirriemuir Edition (London, New York and Toronto, 1913), p. 21. All further references to Barrie's work are to this edition.

in the narrative, however, which undermines the apparently straightforward sentimentality, and shows Barrie to be simultaneously more honest than Maclaren, and yet more unscrupulously exploitative of the material of his own life.

There are few serious critics of Barrie as a writer, so it is disheartening to find Allen Wright commenting: 'All the Thrums stories exploded the myth that Victorian Scotland was a patriarchal society. Hendry McQumpha may be an imposing figure but he is subservient to Jess'.[80] Hendry is not, of course, an imposing figure; it would be almost impossible for him to be one with the ludicrous parody of an invented Scottish name which Barrie has bestowed upon him. This betrays Barrie's cynical attitude to his subject matter, and makes it obvious that Wright is either ingenuous or anxious to prove a case. His comment seems to work from the naive premise that Barrie's writing presents a straightforwardly 'realistic' picture of rural Scottish life; whereas there is much evidence to support the view that Barrie's work is quite deliberately and skilfully sentimentalized. Nevertheless, Wright's suggestion that Jess is a dominant figure does point to certain very noticeable and disturbing aspects of the work. Hendry in fact, plays a minor role. However, rather than proving that Scottish society was 'matriarchal', the presentation of Jess raises some awkward questions for the reader who notices that she is not merely a reassuring figure. Many scenes are open to more than one interpretation. The burial of Jess's staff, for instance, is, we are told, a ploy on the now dead Joey's part to prevent her leaving; but

80 J.M. Barrie: Glamour of Twilight (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 35.

the way in which the staff is associated with Jess herself could lead one to surmise that there is another unstated 'meaning' to this episode: that Joey wanted to bury his mother. Jess's opposition to her other son, Jamie's affair with the girl in London suggests how Jess stifles her sons, but Jamie's sense of resentment is never openly acknowledged, and runs as an undercurrent throughout.

It is this unofficial meaning which the 'anti-kailyard' writers will later take up. The kailyard writers set up their mother figures to put across a message, but behind the facade of sentiment here there is a resentment of the restrictiveness of attachment to the mother, resentment of the family, of the liberal message, and indeed, of Scotland itself. Jess represents the liberal image of Scotland: she is 'Mother Scotland'. This is illustrated by the account of her two sons: 'Jamie an' Joey was never nane the same nature. It was aye something in a shop Jamie wanted to be, an' he never cared muckle for his books, but Joey hankered after being a minister, young as he was, an' a minister Hendry an' me would hae done our best to mak' him' (p. 36). Scotland in the nineteenth century could be seen as developing in two directions. Calvinism had led to an individualistic commercialism on the one hand, on the other it modified into liberal piety. Barrie's analysis suggests that the hard-headed commercialism has won out, while the church has died, no longer able to sustain itself. Barrie's own career is a testimony to the triumph of the commercial instinct. Like Jamie, Barrie leaves Mother Scotland behind, to capture her only in a series of profitable fictions. She is imaged as an old, sick woman, trapped in her isolated existence, with nothing left to do but die once her sons have left. The prodigal son returns from time to time, from his successful London

existence, apparently haunted by an unacknowledged guilt and resentment of the hold she still has on him.

The commercial success of Barrie's work makes it of particular sociological significance. Clearly, this fiction is dangerously limiting in the images of women it presents,but it is worth attempting to understand the reasons for the appearance of the phenomenon known as 'the kailyard', which has been dismissed all too readily. The 'kailyard' has a significant role in Scottish culture not by any literary virtue but because it has been so influential in forming views of Scotland both at home and abroad, and because of the reaction it provokes in writers in the later nineteenth and in the twentieth century. We can, perhaps, achieve a fairer assessment of 'kailyard' if we set it in a wider perspective. Ann Douglas's invaluable study of the interaction of nineteenth-century religious culture with literature charts similar developments to the ones discussed here in the Scottish context. In nineteenth-century America Calvinism gave way to liberal piety and sentimentalism, and the church, preoccupied with its own instability, was less concerned with intellectual matters than previously. Sentimental literature was largely the work of liberal ministers and middle-class women, groups which, she argues, shared a common lack of power:

> It is hardly accidental that soap opera, an increasing speciality of nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism, is a phenomenon which we associate with the special needs of feminine subculture. Cut off at every point from his masculine heritage, whether economic, political, or intellectual, the liberal minister was pushed into a position increasingly resembling the evolving feminine one. [81]

81 The Feminization of American Culture (New York, 1977), p. 42 Further references are given after quotations in the text. For discussion of the same area see also Barbara Welter, 'the Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860', in Clio's Consciousness Raised : New Perspectives on the History of Women, edited by Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner (New York etc, 1974), pp. 137-157.

Both women and ministers, lacking any real 'power', but with growing access to literary outlets, sought to exert influence through writing. Their themes, not surprisingly, considering their limited positions, tend to be domestic or religious. The identification of kailyard as 'non-masculine' is partly due to its being in many cases actually written by and for women. Although much of the kailyard fiction I have discussed is by men, it is likely that the audience was predominantly female; a man as sensitive to audience demand as was Robertson Nicoll must certainly have been aware of a female readership. Unfortunately the 'non-masculinity' of kailyard fiction - it tends typically to be seen as 'effeminate' rather than fully 'feminine' - is tied up with what is viewed as a lack of intellectual respectability, and an irresponsible commercialism.

Ann Douglas offers an argument relating to the American context, which acts as a suitable corrective to the many attacks on the Scottish kailyard also; both liberal ministers and middle-class women were genuinely insecure, and not altogether blameworthy:

> Whatever their ambiguities of motivation, both believed they had a genuine redemptive mission in their society: to propagate the potentially matriarchal virtues of nurture, generosity, and acceptance; to create the "culture of the feelings" that John Stuart Mill was to find during the same period in Wordsworth. It is hardly altogether their fault that their efforts intensified sentimental rather than matriarchal values. (pp. 10-11)

Of course the motives of some of the individuals concerned were not particularly praiseworthy, and J.M. Barrie for instance was a shrewd man with a keen eye for the market, rather than a genuine nurturer of 'matriarchal' values. The kailyard was created at a time when Scotland was becoming heavily industrialized, when female roles were changing, and when Scottish identity was being challenged, yet

kailyard fictions ignore or deny all these problems. Although it protests, in a way, against the values of competitive commercial society, as Ann Douglas says,

> Sentimentalism is a complex phenomenon. It asserts that the values a society's activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation by the manipulation of nostalgia. Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated. It is a form of dragging one's heels. (p. 12)

In the case of the kailyard, it is perhaps worse even than that, for the commercial potential of the tales of rural Scotland and old Scottish mothers was considerable, and thus the kailyard actually participates in what it obliquely criticizes.

Yet despite the very real reasons for criticizing the kailyard, we should bear in mind the reasons for its development. Such issues as the female readership, still apparently unexplored in the Scottish context, are surely of some significance when the violent reaction to the kailyard is considered. The sub-literary nature of this 'effeminate' literature, as it was seen to be, provoked more serious writers to an assertion of 'masculinity'. Again, there are parallels with the American situation. Ann Douglas points out that in nineteenth-century American literature, only sentimental fiction dealt with the so-called 'feminine' themes, while the serious writers, such as Melville, Cooper and Whitman treated of more 'masculine' subjects: out-door life, brutality, the forces of nature. This contrasts with English fiction, where Dickens, George Eliot and others were serious writers, and yet treated of themes such as 'feminine purity', the sanctity of the childish heart, and religious conformity (pp. 5-6). The Scottish situation is comparable with the American:

the 'feminine' is identified with the sentimental, and both with sub-literary standards. The identification of the sub-literary feminine leads in Scotland to a backlash into 'masculine' seriousness. In the twentieth century we find writers like Hugh MacDiarmid adopting an anti-liberal, aggressively 'masculine' stance; and in fiction written in response to the kailyard, we find once again an emphasis on 'masculine' Calvinism.

VII

Many writers react vigorously against the kailyard, rejecting its dishonesty about Scotland, its sentimentality and its commercial opportunism. In seeking to offer a corrective vision, Scottish writers re-emphasize all that the kailyard and the liberal theologians had denied. The literature of liberal theology had placed a woman centrally as a symbol of the values and qualities it wished to promote, and to offer a vision of Scotland which was appealing and reassuring. In order to contradict this, a number of writers present us with fictions which, like 'Julie Logan', are concerned with the issue of national identity, but which represent Scotland symbolically as a divided family, in which the dominant figure is now the father, an intensely masculine force.

Such characters as John Gourlay in George Douglas Brown's The House with the Green Shutters and Gillespie in J. MacDougall Hay's novel of that name, act as a denial of kailyard 'effeminate' liberalism; they also symbolize the continued power of Calvinism in Scottish society. Writers are now distanced enough from Calvinism to represent it symbolically, but it is still a central preoccupation.

Hermiston in Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston can readily be seen as representing the older form of Calvinism [82]; he has the gruffness described by Lord Cockburn, and he despises his son's liberalism: '"There's no room for splairgers under the fower quarters of John Calvin"'. [83] The self-assertiveness which we have seen earlier to be readily associated with Calvinism, is here embodied as 'masculinity', and these dominant father figures offer the message that Calvinism is still powerful, while the liberal tradition is characterized in the weakly females such as Mrs Weir in Weir of Hermiston, who dies, and thus it is suggested liberalism simply cannot sustain itself; it is too weak and ineffectual.

The masculine Calvinist Scotland posited by the anti-kailyarders is now explicitly criticized as well, however, for Brown and Hay, especially, wish to reveal the 'truth' about Scottish society, exposing what the kailyarders evaded. For this reason we are shown how Calvinism has developed into a selfish and materialist individualism. Whether or not Calvinism did in fact lead to capitalism is debatable, but many writers present it as fostering a spirit of individualism and a materialism that affects the place of women. [84] Even in Galt's pre-kailyard fiction, the Reverend

82 See Paul Binding's Introduction to Weir of Hermiston (Harmondsworth 1979), pp. 32-39. See also J.D. Scott, 'R.L. Stevenson and G.D. Brown: The Myth of Lord Braxfield', Horizon, XIII, 77, May, 1946, pp. 298-310.

83 Robert Louis Stevenson, Works, vol XIV, p. 40.

84 Calvin wrote that 'works' are not a way to obtain salvation (see Wendel, p. 277) but Calvinism may have been prone to distorted interpretations, in which worldly success became a means of 'proving' oneself. See Marshall, p. 48, and Drummond and Bulloch, The Church in Late Victorian Scotland 1843-1874, p. 216.

Balwhidder is shown to display a canny materialism in his choice of wives. The second Mrs Balwhidder is 'Miss Lizy Kibbock, the well-brought-up daughter of Mr Joseph Kibbock of the Gorbyholm who was the first that made a speculation in the farming way in Ayrshire, and whose cheeses were of such an excellent quality, that they have, under the name of Delap-cheese, spread far and wide over the civilized world'. [85] Galt's humour gives way to a darker vision in the later novel by Brown, The House with the Green Shutters, in which the central male figure has made his money initially through marriage: '"It was the bawbees, and not the woman that Gourlay went after! It was her money, as ye ken, that set him on his feet, and made him such a big man"'. [86] Yet Gourlay despises his wife, and when he goes bankrupt she has only the workhouse before her. This is one 'reality' about the role of women in Scotland which the kailyard chose not to present. Brown also offers, in young John, a version of the kailyard 'lad o' pairts' and shows how his sister, although cleverer than he is, is not given the opportunity for education which he is given and which he wastes.

Hay's Gillespie, too, offers a social critique of the way 'masculine' capitalism oppresses women. [87] Gillespie marries Morag for her money, and makes her life a misery. Topsail Janet tries to enter the commercial world; she opens a shop, but the fact that it is a toy-shop illustrates her innocent nature. In a world dominated by

85 John Galt, Annals of the Parish (Edited by D.S. Meldrum and William Roughead, Edinburgh 1936), Chapter VI, p. 46. First published 1821.

86 George Douglas Brown, The House with the Green Shutters (London, 1901), p. 47. All references are to this edition.

87 J. MacDougall Hay, Gillespie (London, 1914) All references are to this edition.

the ruthless competitive spirit and guile of Gillespie, the woman cannot win, and Janet is bought over by him. Mrs Galbraith also has her life ruined by Gillespie, so that a central opposition is set up between masculine exploitation and female victims.

Other aspects of the Calvinist-derived social oppression of women are explored by Hay and Brown. Brown's little-known short story 'How Janet Goudie Came Home', renders with great delicacy the troubled consciousness of a young girl coming home to confront her father after having 'fallen', only to find her father is dead, the implication being it is partly shock at her predicament which has killed him. The story sympathetically presents the girl's point of view:

> When she came out upon the bare uplands they were flooded with uncanny light. It dazzled Janet so that she could scarcely see the house lying straight before her. Her whole body felt how visible to the farm-folk it must be, coming on illumined in the yellow glare. She cowered so closely to the stunted hedge that the straggling brambles tugged at her. A burst of terrible splendour came athwart the world, an awful dying gloom. Far and wide flamed the red and silent moors like altars lighted for the end of time. Janet crept on, feeling mean and little in the great desolation.
>
> At last she stood within the long shadow that was cast towards her by the house. So dark and silent were the buildings that her heart stopped beating with a sudden dread. But presently a familiar sound fell on her ear, and she breathed with relief on looking round. Over in the little croft the ducks were waddling home, late as usual, and clattering away to themselves. When the drake stood up and flapped his wings the white round of his breast shone vividly. [88]

Although we gain intimate access to the girl's thoughts, the story also suggests the emotional importance to her of her father, and something of his power. She remembers when her father returned from the winter fair, 'coming in from the wonderful darkness, with snowflakes

88 published by Brown under the pseudonym 'Kennedy King', in The Speaker, 20, July 15th, 1899, pp. 43-4 (p. 43). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

on his coat, to his little girl by the great fire - how blithe had been his dark eye, how cheery and red the middle of his cheek. She could still feel his fingers rough and cold beneath her chin, and the benediction of his eyes looking down at her' (p. 43). Even in death, the father retains his hold on the girl; as the corpse lies in the dying rays of sunset (a fascinating foreshadowing of John Guthrie in Sunset Song), 'it seemed to Janet that his shut lips smiled - smiled with the quiet irony of the dead, who know the secrets of all things, and will tell us nothing' (p. 44). The story conveys the girl's grief, while suggesting that the man has impressed on her so strong a sense of her own guilt that she will probably never recover from this experience.

Hay's Gillespie more damningly exposes the sexual hypocrisy of Presbyterian society, making us party to the troubled consciousness of the boy Eoghan Strang, whose hypocrisy is contextualized by the liberal morality of the preacher Maurice; and Hay also gives us access to the consciousness of the 'fallen' woman, the unfortunate Morag, whose oppression is made most immediate to us by this enforced identification with her. These fictional works thus appear to be in many ways sympathetic to women, offering analyses of oppression, and presenting the female consciousness, something which none of the earlier fictions had done to any sustained degree. Yet despite their exaggerated social realism - and doubtless some of what they show hit the mark - these are essentially symbolic works of fiction. John Gourlay's 'masculinity' symbolically represents a destructive force in Scottish society. His ride through the storm has led to the destruction of his wife's 'femininity', which is also symbolic of certain ideas: fertility, imagination, creativity, sensitivity.

Gillespie in Hay's novel is the creation of parents seeking to suppress the 'feminine' aspect of his inheritance, which is associated with irrationality and imagination. Denial of these qualities leads to his massively destructive 'masculinity'. Symbolically, extreme masculinity is shown to be a destructive force; however, it dominates these works, these fictional worlds. Scotland is characterized as intensely male.

Furthermore, although Gourlay, for instance, is destructive, he is also somewhat splendid, representing qualities which the all-too-safe kailyard had denied, qualities of vigour and strength. Scott rejected the past and yet was fascinated by it: 'the violence, the romantic intrigue, the chivalrous relations, the rude but intense religious beliefs, and the aristocratic values which characterized the life of superstition are interesting' [89] and likewise, although Gourlay is destructive, like Redgauntlet he has a Romantic energy which his creator seems to admire. Gourlay's Romantic masculine power is devilish; he has the supernatural power of the devil, whose place in Scottish folk culture is attributable to the Calvinist emphasis on the iconology of evil, but who has been taken up as representative of rebellion against social and religious strictures as well. The association of the devil in Romantic art with grandeur, energy and power has been remarked by Mario Praz, [90] but in Scotland the devil is a peculiarly national figure, used by Burns in criticism of his society; significantly, the devil's erotic

89 Cottom, 'The Waverley Novels: Superstition and the Enchanted Reader', p. 84.

90 The Romantic Agony, translated by Angus Davidson (Second Edition, London, 1951), Chapter 2, pp. 55-94. All references are to this edition of the book, first published in English in 1933.

qualities are an aspect of this, representing the 'compensatory sexuality that was a covert element of folk-culture'. [91] The devil's overt masculinity - embodied in Gourlay who has 'a chest like the heave of a hill' (p. 113) and who is implicitly compared to a bull in the sale-yard (pp. 266-7) - is thus a further element in his Romantic appeal; a rebuke to the asexual kailyard, with its reticent gentility. When Henry James Senior is recorded as having remarked on the death of American Calvinism that 'religion in the old virile sense has disappeared and been replaced by a feeble Unitarian sentimentality' [92], the equation of Calvinism with masculinity resembles that found in the Scottish context. As Ann Douglas remarks, there is 'palpable masculine bias in these statements, an unexplored assumption that virility and more general worthiness are roughly synonymous' (p. 18). Such statements rest on general social assumptions about the nature of masculinity and femininity, with a bias towards the supposed values of masculinity. While this is the case, women are likely to be represented in generally unfavourable terms.

Indeed, the preoccupation with 'masculine' Calvinism seems to run counter to the full and sympathetic representation of women. The central female characters in the novels of the anti-kailyard, the wives of the dominant men, are weak and submissive. Of course, this is partly due to their being used to show the falsehood of the kailyard idealization of women and their role in society. Mrs Gourlay, like Morag Strang, is an implicit contradiction of the

91 Andrew Noble, 'Burns, Blake and Romantic Revolt', p. 211

92 Quoted by Ann Douglas, p. 17, citing F.W. Dupee, Henry James: His Life and Writings (New York, 1956), p. 11. Further references to Douglas are given after quotations in the text.

kailyard mother. Mrs Gourlay is also shown as weak because of her symbolic function; she represents 'liberal' qualities which were expressed in the kailyard through the image of 'femininity'. Brown's dislike of the kailyard leads him to present 'femininity' as weak, ineffectual and morally corrupt, represented by feeble women and 'effeminate' men such as John Gourlay the younger, the 'auld wives' of bodies (p. 33) and the 'bonny man', Wilson (p. 113), described as 'not a hardy man' (p. 75). Brown himself recognized that his anger led him to 'blacken' his picture, so that his extreme sexual metaphors are presented in a tone of scornful intolerance. [93] The presentation of 'femininity' in terms of weakness and moral corruption may be due in part, too, to Brown's concern with the idea of the Calvinist conscience. Young John Gourlay's conscience is one aspect of his 'fearful' character, as it was of Adam Yestreen. His sin, however, is nothing to do with a woman; John himself is 'effeminate'. We saw earlier that Calvinism demands submission of the individual, yet submission is also an implicit acknowledgement of moral corruption through original sin. Since submissiveness is traditionally associated with femininity, or non-masculinity (a lack of 'virility'), femininity becomes by a process of association linked with moral corruption. The snivelling, 'effeminate' John might be usefully compared to Robert Wringhim in Hogg's Justified Sinner, who is cravenly submissive, and presented as being much less 'manly' than his more robust brother.

93 See James Veitch, George Douglas Brown (London, 1952), p. 153; he quotes a letter from Brown to a friend in which Brown states of his novel, 'There is too much black for the white in it'. (letter to Ernest Barker, 24th October, 1901).

Some women do appear in more 'powerful' roles than the wives at the centre of these novels. Mrs Wilson and Templandmuir's wife in The House with the Green Shutters are tough and capable, more so than their husbands; even the minister's wife is described in passing as 'a six-footer' (p. 69), and Johnny Coe's sister has 'fifty times the spunk of Johnny' (p. 269), while Mrs Webster, the wife of Drucken Webster may well be descended from Tam o'Shanter's wife (p. 224). However, while Brown's tough women are probably to some extent based on observation of the working women of Ayrshire, and are used to shed a somewhat critical light on the male characters, they are hardly attractive characters. Mrs Wilson clearly has some of the 'masculine', life-giving grandeur that is admirable in Gourlay, but this simply illustrates the point that masculinity is intrinsically admirable. Although Mrs Wilson is a more energetic and vigorous figure than Mrs Gourlay, the 'strong' women are presented as unpleasantly dominant, and are thus used to make a symbolic point about the imbalanced nature of this society, in which women are strong and men are weak. Such a vision of Scottish society has persisted in the popular mythology of the country. The large, capable wife, bossing the small hen-pecked husband, is for instance, a central figure in the famous strip cartoon 'The Broons'.

The House with the Green Shutters exhibits a persistent preoccupation with the idea of Calvinism, symbolically presented in terms of masculinity and femininity. Gillespie, however, also illustrates the continuing power of Calvinism as a living force still working through the fiction itself. This seriously affects the female role as it did in earlier fiction. Gillespie was first published in 1914, when Modernists elsewhere were troubled by the 'death' of

Christianity and other social and moral structures. While this remarkable Scottish novel shows a new interest in experimental narrative techniques, it exhibits a continuing Calvinist moral impetus. Unfortunately Hay's novel enforces this moral end at the expense of a female character who is of great interest. Margaret Galbraith might be described as the first self-conscious feminist we have yet come across in Scottish fiction by male authors. Yet she is sacrificed on a narrative level, and artistically, to the didactic ends of the novel.

Margaret Galbraith is presented as a woman of culture and intellect:

> She was accomplished – played the piano well, had a cultured taste in poetry, read Wordsworth among the woods, was fond of philosophy and, on occasion, would enter warmly into argument with the Rev. Angus Stuart, minister of the parish, a gross, stout man, a gourmand who preferred Galbraith's bottle to his wife's incisive speculations. [94]

She is interesting to the modern reader because she is presented as a sensitive, educated woman, but she is a country woman, too, for 'She came of a landward stock, one of six daughters, who had heroically, and with cheerful semblance, taken to teaching to relieve the cramped life of their father's farm' (p. 43). Like other country women we have seen in Scottish fiction, she is capable and strong-natured, and her power is expressed in her appearance: 'An imperious women to look at, with her clear, penetrative glance from level, fearless eyes. She had the hearty laugh of one who readily detects the humour in things' (p. 44). Strong, yet physically attractive, and intelligent, she seems at first to combine the strength of a Mrs

94 Gillespie, p. 43. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Wilson, with the more aesthetic interests and intellect usually attributed to male characters. We gain considerable access to her consciousness, which registers vividly the beauty of landscape and nature; and we also gain insight into her suffering at the loss of her husband and of her farm. We are made to sympathize strongly with this woman who is yet another victim of the monstrous Gillespie; even he recognizes in her a woman to be respected and admired.

However, while Hay appears to establish Mrs Galbraith as a significant character, whose nature and values are generally 'liberal', he also uses her to make one of the central moral points of the novel in another way. One of the main messages of the book is that 'to God alone belongeth vengeance', and Hay shows Margaret Galbraith vowing revenge on Gillespie. It is interesting that Hay should choose to cast a women in the role of usurper, the self who seeks to exert power despite God's sole right to judgement, just as MacDonald did in Lilith. Probably, like MacDonald, Hay chose a woman for this part in his novel because the moral corruption of women is even more shocking since they are traditionally the 'moral' sex, according to the Victorian view, and at a time when women were actively seeking to establish their rights, such a theme would readily suggest itself. Hay appears to wish the reader to see Margaret Galbraith's growing corruption primarily as another example of the way in which Gillespie's evil spreads to contaminate individuals who are essentially good. That such a strong and benevolent woman could become tainted illustrates the power of Gillespie's evil. Nevertheless, Hay has to try and convey to the reader a sense of Mrs Galbraith's changing personality. Unfortunately, there are some problems to be faced in the novel's handling of Mrs Galbraith's character, as the modern

editors of Gillespie point out.[95] Hay introduces the change in her personality rather too abruptly; on pp. 217-221 we are made party to her sensitive awareness of the natural world, and her spiritual perceptions. Within a few pages we are shown her speaking 'in a tone of acid irony' (p. 226) and treating Morag Strang with ruthless cruelty. Although her desire for revenge is reiterated, it is difficult to reconcile her apparent callousness in her treatment of Morag with what we have seen of her nature previously.

Certainly, the idea that Margaret Galbraith is capable of using people for her own ends is introduced early on, for we are told she 'had married Galbraith to get back to the robust life of the country' (p. 43). This prepares us for the idea that she may be willing to make use of people for her own purposes, although we are also told she genuinely loved her husband in the early days, so that even this calculated act is scarcely comparable to her later abuse of Morag. She is prepared to marry Lonend for her own purposes, as well, certainly, although this, too, sits uneasily with her nature as it has been expressed to us, and Hay resorts to mere assertion of the change in Mrs Galbraith:

> With eyes of contempt Mrs Galbraith took the flowers. "If Mr. Strang has robbed me of my garden I'm glad to see his wife makes up for it."
>
> This was a new tone for Mrs Galbraith, who had no longer any use for this broken instrument. To understand this it is necessary to trace the mental development or rather the retrogression of this arrogant, strong-willed woman. She was in some respects a tragic figure, with her fine intellect prostituted to plans of cunning, and to a perversity which, afflicting her with a moral nausea in its early stages, was founded on loyalty to her husband's memory, which she continued to revere, and which had proved an insuperable barrier to Lonend's matrimonial schemes. (pp. 501-2).

95 Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, introduction to Gillespie (1979), pp. vii-xvi, (p. x).

One problem, then in Hay's presentation of Margaret Galbraith is that he faces difficulty in rendering convincingly a massive personality change, and he is not altogether successful in his attempt. Another problem lies in the evident justice of her grievance against Gillespie, whose selfishness and cruelty have been amply demonstrated throughout the novel. It is evident that we are intended to sympathize with Mrs Galbraith's predicament, and this sympathy complicates our response to her desire for revenge.

Such is the extent of this society's ill-treatment of her, and of women in general, that many of her bitter remarks appear justified, for her claims are borne out by the events of the novel. Mrs Galbraith complains of the hypocrisy of this supposedly Christian society, and especially of its treatment of women:

> Men had brought upon her all the suffering she endured. They were rank egotists, ruthless liars, perjurers, murderers, who, in spite of Christianity, made slaves of women, beginning in slight, insinuating ways, seizing every advantage of woman's pity and sympathy, and relying on her mercy, till they had her beneath their heel. She read anew into the original attitude of Jesus Christ towards women. The half of His ethic was a championing of their cause and claims. More than half the ignominy, the disgrace and shame of the world they bore, and often in secret, for the sake of their name, their family, and their home. They compromised themselves, not out of vice, but simply to please men, who take advantage of the ease with which they succumb to the male influence. Man had taught woman bestiality and then visited her sins pitilessly upon her, while he demanded tacitly or professedly for himself the greatest latitude. He had not eradicated from his nature the disposition of his savage ancestors to regard woman as a piece of chattels. (p. 502)

Many of her ideas here are given credence by the action of the novel. The worst offender, of course, is Gillespie himself, but other characters such as Eoghan Strang mistreat women; his attitude to his mother is one example of male hypocrisy, and we hear other men of the

community condemn Morag as 'only an auld bauchle o' a whure' (p. 544). Margaret Galbraith herself has known the connections between matrimony and money; her husband 'used to say jocularly, in his cups, that he had bought her like a filly' (p. 43) and after his death she falls hopelessly into Gillespie's power, because she has no money and rights of her own. Thus Mrs Galbraith's proto-feminist speech is given backing by its context; women obviously are badly treated in this society.

However, Mrs Galbraith herself is, of course, abusing Morag. This mitigates the justice of her complaints, and adds to the general confusion. This contradiction in her personality might have been explored as an interesting area of moral complexity, but as it is, it is never fully developed. The reader is also likely to find Mrs Galbraith's repentance unsatisfactory. Again, there is inadequate preparation for Mrs Galbraith's return to the values of her former self at the end. We are only told in the closing pages of the novel that she has finally realized the truth of the Bible: 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (p. 610). Her repentance is evidently meant to be of some importance, for it dominates the end of Chapter 18, the second last chapter, and the last page of the novel is given over to Mrs Galbraith. The novel ends with the words: '"Earth to earth, dust to dust," murmured Mrs Galbraith, as she shook the tears from her eyes. The ploughman on Muirhead Farm went on ploughing the lea, ministering to the faith that is imperishable in the breast of man' (p. 619). Clearly Mrs Galbraith's part in the story is given a final prominence, but in the novel as a whole it has only been conveyed with partial success to the reader, who is left feeling that the character has been

manipulated for the purpose of the author's moral end, which is clearly suggested in these final pages.

Margaret Galbraith is a potentially impressive female character, but she illustrates once again the way in which the need to pursue and enforce a Calvinist, Christian moral end works against the full and satisfactory representation of a woman in the fiction. Hay implies, and partly evokes, a depth of character which is not satisfactorily developed, stymied by the over-riding didactic purpose, but which is developed enough to leave us frustrated at this artistic failure. It is particularly disappointing to find such an interesting, rebellious woman being awkwardly forced into submission. As in the case of Flora MacIvor and Charlotte Campbell, her defiant personality is sympathetically suggested, and hints at her creator's torn sympathies, but ultimately she is denied, and the moral purpose means she is finally rather conventional in social terms, and less than successful in literary terms.

Brown and Hay do actually preach that 'Charity' is needed in Scottish society; the message put into the mouth of Mrs Gourlay in The House with the Green Shutters is not so different in essence from that of the liberal theologians although the overall effect is, of course, very different. The result of an extreme reaction against the tone and imagery of the kailyard is the creation of a set of dominant images of excessive, destructive masculinity and weak, ineffectual femininity. Although essentially symbolic, intended as statements about Scotland, its culture and society and its lack of balance, such sexual metaphors have a 'realistic' aspect- men as strong and dominant, women as weak and oppressed or strong but

thwarted. These images have had a deep and lasting impression on the fictional representation of gender roles in Scotland. They have persisted in novels such as Ian Macpherson's Shepherd's Calendar and Land of Our Fathers, in some of Grassic Gibbon's fiction, such as the short story 'Greenden', and in the more recent work of Jessie Kesson, in Glitter of Mica. Such fictions do probably have a basis in 'reality'. Novels dealing with farming life and urban hardship are likely to represent unequal sexual roles which are a feature of society at large, but which may be particularly characteristic of certain types of society. Nevertheless, it would seem that Scottish fiction has developed a kind of mythology of sexual roles which is not merely a reflection of social reality, but uses gender to make statements about society.

There is a specially persistent and obvious concern with 'masculinity' in modern Scottish fiction. The image of the Scottish 'hard man', often a violent figure, certainly has roots in a troubled society, but is also descended from such fictional characters as John Gourlay, as Cairns Craig has pointed out.[96] Dunky Logan in Gordon Williams's From Scenes Like These, and Tam Docherty in William McIlvanney's Docherty reveal a fascination with masculine power; although by no means straightforwardly admirable, and presented with

96 See 'Fearful Selves: Character, Community and the Scottish Imagination', Cencrastus, 4, Winter 1980-81, 29-32 (p. 32): 'Gourlay's "manhood" declines from an assertion of selfhood into the lowest form in which it can prove itself without fear, its ability to threaten others. Such heroes, their fearlessness not a challenge to a fearful community but itself the source of the community's fear, have become a potent archetype in much contemporary Scottish literature'.

some ambivalence, such images are all too readily seen as definitions of Scottish male identity. Derived at least in part from a continuing preoccupation with national identity defined in complex ways through religion, such masculine images, like those of women, are somewhat limiting, and will probably be challenged in time, as sexual roles are increasingly changing in society.

VIII

The 'masculine' images of Scotland perpetrated by 'anti-kailyard' writers such as Hay and Brown have proved very influential, and the continued tendency to enforce Calvinist-derived moral conclusions is evident. However, there is a further reaction against this in twentieth-century Scottish fiction, leading to a renewed emphasis on the 'feminine' qualities previously promoted in the nineteenth century by the liberal theologians. The Romantic symbol of the woman again becomes central in many modern Scottish novels, in opposition to all that is represented by Calvinism.[97] Emphasis on the 'feminine' values is of course not unique to Scotland at this time. The idea of creative femininity is symbolically significant in the work of many modernists such as Forster, Woolf, Joyce and Lawrence; but in Scotland the reaction against Calvinism produces an especially dominant concern with the Romantic image of the woman, often linked with the idea of national identity. The decline of Christianity in Scotland, too,

97 Douglas Gifford in 'In Search of the Scottish Renaissance - The Reprinting of Scottish Fiction', Cencrastus, 9 (Summer 1982), pp. 26-30, comments on the way in which major modern Scottish writers display an 'underlying unity of desire for a rediscovery of a pre-Reformation Scottish spiritual awareness, employing ancient and even supernaturally perceived archetypes and images' (p. 26).

brings about a renewed emphasis on the woman as a symbol of an alternative source of meaning. It is significant that young Archie in Weir of Hermiston first sees Kirstie in church, where her youth, vitality and 'natural' beauty stimulate him to respond with relief after the repressiveness of his dogmatic father and the weak religiosity of his now dead mother. The older Kirstie is more deeply rooted in the landscape, and embodies a timeless natural strength that is closely linked to her intensely local identity.

The mythic Kirstie is in many ways a link between twentieth-century fictional women in Scotland and their nineteenth-century predecessors, such as Madge Wildfire, who, living outwith the law and the church, are vital symbols of nature. In some twentieth-century fictional creations there are also echoes of the kailyard; Neil Gunn's mother figures, for instance, like earlier ones, are significantly opposed to the image of the Calvinist God. Kenn's mother, in Highland River, restores the hero to a vision of life:

> For by listening and staring hard enough, one may become a little uncomfortable over one does not know what, as though Something might come quietly up over the hills of space that are also the hills of time, and suddenly be there before one (it being the Sabbath day) like the Spirit of God.
>
> But a glance back at his mother's face and the fear that accompanies every thought of God vanishes. So quiet and contemplative and abiding she is, that from the shelter of her skirts one may brave God and all the unknown and terrifying things that go back beyond the hills to the ends of the earth and the beginnings of time. [98]

However, while the mother's role in Gunn's work is a key one, Gunn's fictional women exist in a relationship with time, nature and the land that goes beyond anything in the kailyard. Like Kirstie Elliott,

98 Neil M. Gunn, Highland River (Edinburgh, 1937), pp. 134-5.

they tend to represent natural forces, and acquire an ahistorical mythic status, drawn in opposition to a religious system that is presented as life-denying and repressive.

In The Serpent, the power of the church is personified in the ministers:

> "They have the supernatural world behind them as well. It gives them tremendous power," said Dougal thoughtfully. "Have you ever thought of that- the power it gives them? And it's cunning, too. You see, they have the earthly power. And when that power is questioned, they refer back to the supernatural power. The minister gets his power not from himself but from God. He remains the master of your thought- as the servant of God". [99]

There is a central opposition in this novel between the forces of Calvinism, embodied not only by the men of the church but by other 'masculine' figures, and the 'feminine' most notably embodied in the character of Janet. At one point, the central character Tom, brooding on his experience, thinks, 'was he looking back on all this now with the eye of age, wherein his mother was the symbol of creation, his father of God, and Janet the symbol of love?' (p. 66). Tom soon attaches a disclaimer to this thought: 'Janet as a symbol! High heaven save us from the symbolists, from the abstracters! Give us back the earth and the flesh and the lovely currents that flow in and between them!' (p. 67). Despite this, Tom's signalling of the dangers of seeing people as symbols points to certain difficulties in the novel which recur elsewhere in Gunn's fiction.

Firstly, there is the problem of presenting as 'realistic', in a novel with a strong 'realist' dimension, a character whose role in the

99 Neil M. Gunn, The Serpent (London, 1943), p. 14. All references are to this edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

novel is essentially symbolic. Janet never really comes to life as a character because she represents the 'essential feminine', which is persistently linked with the natural world, with the purely instinctive and animal. We are told, 'She could come away from the rapt moment, like a rabbit coming out of its burrow to look around' (p. 70). Again, when Tom thinks about Janet's name, he muses:

> Janet. Janet. It was a lovely name. There was colour in it, somewhere between the yellow of peat flame and the red of a wild rose. The warmth of hands stretched to a fire; a yellow crocus in the snow. A Scots name. Janet. The syllables quick with life, moving over green grass to a little house on their own two feet. (p. 73)

This passage suggests the continuous linking of Janet with the natural world and its beauty, but also the dangers of over-simplification and sentimentality implicit in the attempt to convey this, her 'essential' nature. Furthermore, the concentration on Tom's perspective throughout the narrative (it is he who makes so many of these links) means that we always see Janet externally, as an aspect of Tom's experience, so that she never really develops any more complex or autonomous 'identity'. Tom believes that the tendency to 'abstraction' and symbolizing is a human and important one, one he recognizes too as a powerful impulse in Calvinist thought (p. 66), but he chastizes himself for too great a desire to see people- especially Janet- this way; and there is surely a central contradiction in the novel as a whole, since the character who supposedly represents 'life' and the vivid emotion of 'Love', remains essentially shadowy and unconvincing.

The second major problem to confront in the characterization of Janet is the very <u>idea</u> of symbolic femininity which Gunn employs. The novel appears to posit a central opposition between the idea of 'essential femininity', and the 'masculine'. Tom studies a letter

from Rousseau, to David Hume:

> He had no knowledge of any other writings by Rousseau then, and looked upon that last long epistle as a manifestation, almost perverse in its innate subtlety, of the feminine mind. He felt no essential kinship to Rousseau. The relationship seemed one of extreme interest, brought about by irrational experiences he had gone through, and sometimes, in the contemplative pause of his thought, a pale reflection of Janet's face would, as it were, pass him by. Only gradually indeed did he perceive the existence of that queer irrational world as a realm of experience all its own with even a rationale of its own, particularly where it approached in living essence the feminine mind. (p. 238)

Tom perceives an essential difference between the 'masculine' mind, and the feminine. Certainly, there are hints that social structures have contributed to the exclusion of 'the feminine' from the dominant masculine arena of ideas. Indeed, there is a strong element of social criticism in the novel, for it is the minister's son who has caused Janet's pregnancy and who abandons her. This is an implicit criticism of the church which echoes many earlier such criticisms, in other Scottish novels. Tom himself comes to feel that he could learn from a woman's way of perceiving and approaching things (p. 240, for instance).

However, the idea of 'the feminine mind' - a telling phrase, and a problematic one - suggests that Gunn is positing an innate contrast between masculine and feminine nature and values. Throughout the novel, Janet is described repeatedly in terms of the natural world (e.g. p. 71) and as a being moved only by emotions and simple passions; at one stage we are told 'Already there was some deep consciousness in her of her power as an attractive woman. But what made this attraction more powerful was some simple lingering element of the child mind' (p. 50). The continual emphasis on Janet's simplicity

and passivity (for instance p. 51, p. 105) contributes strongly to a vision of 'femininity' as something essentially limited. The male characters in the novel are linked with the repressive dogmatism of religion, or, in Tom's case, with an intellectuality that has its own limitations, but they are, nonetheless, active. The restriction of the female role in this way, to something symbolic and even stereotypic, and to an association with passivity, demands serious consideration. It constitutes a limitation in the novel as a whole.

This kind of limitation occurs not only in Gunn's novels, it seems to recur in Scottish fiction. The tendency to present women in terms of 'essential' femininity, or as representative of certain values, appears to be encouraged by the need to find symbols to oppose to the values of Calvinism, as I have tried to illustrate at some length in this chapter. I have attempted to show that religious culture in Scotland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries indeed restricts the role of women in fiction in a variety of ways. Women characters are all too often symbolic and one-dimensional, presented as aspects of the experience, and often elements in the consciousness, of more central male characters. Although strong and sometimes dominant female characters are found in Scottish fiction of this period, female sexuality is often abhorred and rejected as evil or threatening, and even in more 'liberal' fiction, women are represented most ambiguously. Although the female character is frequently more sympathetically presented, as is Janet in The Serpent, the characterization of women is often scarcely adequate when compared with that of their male counterparts, in a broad novelistic sense. 'Femininity' may be considered as a criterion of value by some writers, but the persistently held view of female nature as something definable

and finite leads to the depiction of women in disappointingly limited ways. This is a critical problem which recurs in modern fiction, for reasons which include the continued significance of religion in Scottish culture.

Other factors are involved in the persistent tendency to represent women in heavily circumscribed roles. Some of these issues have already been raised in previous chapters, but will be considered more fully in the next chapter, which takes as its main subject the Romantic and 'romance' roles assigned to women in Scottish fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER 4

ROMANTICISM

I ROMANTICISM IN SCOTLAND

II CRITICIZING ROMANTICISM : THE ISSUES FOR WOMEN

III SCOTTISH FANTASY : MACDONALD AND LINDSAY

IV ROMANCE INTO REALISM : MACDONALD, LINDSAY, STEVENSON, BARRIE

V WOMEN, NATURE, THE LAND AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

VI THE TWO KIRSTIES : WEIR OF HERMISTON

VII WOMEN AND THE HIGHLANDS : 'FIONA MACLEOD' AND OTHERS

VIII DARK MAIRI AND SOFT ELIE : GUNN'S SYMBOLIC 'FEMININE'

IX CONCLUDING : PERSISTENT PROBLEMS

I

In the light of the preceding chapter I suggest that religion in Scotland contributed to the development of a characteristically Romantic kind of fiction, Romantic in its forms and in its concerns.

Calvinism fostered an interest in subjectivity and human consciousness, and especially in abnormal states of mind, as we saw in works by Lockhart, Stevenson, and Barrie. Marilyn Butler, one of the few critics to discuss Scottish writers as such in the wider context of Romanticism, has commented of Scottish fiction in the nineteenth century:

> In the second decade of the century the form appeared to contemporaries to be dominated by Scott, writing novels that were at once studies of society and myths about social reconciliation. After 1820 Scott turned increasingly to more disturbing themes and to supernatural devices, and in thus internalizing his approach he was joined by a number of able compatriots. Galt, Hogg and Lockhart all in their different styles preferred to represent the Scottish scene through a more subjective focus. [1]

Calvinism encouraged, too, the development of symbolic fictions, drawing on the typological tradition. The symbolic tendencies were further reinforced by the growth of moderate theology and a concomitant interest in German Romanticism on the part of writers like George MacDonald.

Other factors contributed to what may be described as the Romantic tendencies of Scottish fiction, which have been noted

1 Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries : English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830 (London etc, 1981), p. 161.

both directly and more obliquely by a number of critics. [2] Northrop Frye has commented that: 'In England the romances of Scott and, in less degree, the Brontës, are part of a mysterious Northumbrian renaissance, a Romantic reaction against the new industrialism in the Midlands, which also produced the poetry of Wordsworth and Burns and the philosophy of Carlyle', [3] Frye, being Canadian, may perhaps be excused for imagining that the Scottish Borders, Ayrshire, Yorkshire and the English Midlands are a single homogeneous unit. The differences between them are, of course, quite marked. However, the appearance of several major Scottish writers in his list hints at the possibility that Scotland has made a significant contribution to the Romantic movement.

The rapidity and intensity of industrial development in Lowland Scotland may indeed have contributed to the appearance of romance forms and interests in Scottish fiction. It may be that Scottish writers reacted with particular virulence against the industrialism that was increasingly surrounding them. In Scotland, the contrast between rural, and especially Highland life, and the landscape and society of the industrialized central belt is still particularly stark. Certainly, as the nineteenth century wore on, there was a marked absence of direct fictional treatment by Scottish writers of urbanized modern Scotland. However, English writers did not shirk the horrors of industrial life, as the work of Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell illustrates. This suggests that there are

2 For instance, F.R. Hart, The Scottish Novel (London, 1979); Robert Kiely in The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), despite the title, deals with several Scottish novels.

3 Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 306.

particular reasons for the way in which Scottish fiction evolved.

It is possible that, as Christopher Harvie has argued, 'realism' in literature would have exposed ugly facts too unpleasant to face. The infamous kailyard writers offered images of rural life that provided an escape for readers in the large Scottish cities, and a nostalgic indulgence for Scots living in exile overseas. This kind of fiction paid dividends to those responsible for it, and it was clearly not in their interests to deviate from the winning formula. As Harvie remarks, 'it was also difficult to write honestly about the moral ambiguities of the 'emigration ideology' and imperialism while benefiting from both'. [4]

Kailyard fiction, however, did not spring suddenly from unprepared ground. The vexed relationship between the Scottish novel and Scottish history was created in part by the writer who also, paradoxically, gave Scotland its greatest fiction: Sir Walter Scott. Cairns Craig has argued that Scott and the Enlightenment thinkers between them created a sense of schism between past and present, and a sense that the present in Scotland is non-dynamic. He quotes the famous passage from the 'Postscript' to Waverley, which ends, 'like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have drifted' [5], and remarks on the sense we gain here that although

4 Scotland and Nationalism : Scottish Society and Politics, 1707-1977 (London, 1977), p. 144.

5 Walter Scott, Waverley: or 'Tis Sixty Years Since, Border Edition (London, 1892), II, p. 364.

Scotland has changed, it remains simultaneously static:

> The image of the amnesiac drift of progress offers vividly Scott's underlying sense that the entry into the modern world is an entry into a storyless environment. Narration and history are divorced for Scott: contemporary history is a silent drift, unparticularised by name or deed; narrative can only connect with a disconnected past. If history is narration then the present is post-history; it inhabits a new realm in which there is progress without narrative. At the very moment, therefore, at which history becomes in Europe a living force, the reality in which people live, act and die, Scott divorces the Scottish present from history. [6]

Although Scott's view of history was taken up and used by English, European and American writers, his particular view of Scottish history led to the death of the Scottish 'realist' novel. As Craig says, after Scott and Hogg, 'the tension between the historical and the post-historical, between the Scottish past and the British present, was dissolved, and the land of romance lay in wait for successive waves of colonisation while the real Scotland lay unlooked at' (p. 20). The forms of romance, with their supposedly 'universal' reference and appeal, offer a way out of the impasse created by a lack of historical sense. Romance structures were taken up and used by writers like MacDonald and Lindsay writing fantasy works, often not about Scotland at all, and hence 'liberated' from the problems of a country lacking 'meaning'. Romance in the formal sense has also been adopted by writers such as Stevenson, and more recently, Gunn, writing directly about Scotland; for them romance offers a narrative outline where none appears to exist in history.

Romance is important in the formal sense, but Scottish writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have also pursued some of the same concerns as Romantic writers elsewhere. Scottish writers,

6 Cairns Craig, 'The Body in the Kitbag: History and the Scottish Novel', Cencrastus, 1, (Autumn 1979), 18-22 (p. 19). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

like the English Romantic poets, looked for significance in a world robbed of its former meanings by the impact of the Enlightenment: 'The new Mythus was to be made out of their imaginative insights into the three main aspects of reality- the past, nature and the self'. [7] These are all major areas of concern to Scottish writers, who pursue some of these themes in a Scottish context. The imagination itself is also a major preoccupation, often presented in opposition to a more 'sterile' rationality. Symbolic oppositions are characteristic of Scottish writing, as David Daiches and Douglas Gifford have pointed out: 'Scott's typical pattern of opposition placed Past against Present, Order against Disorder, and- very broadly- a cause of the Heart against a cause of the Head'. [8]

The importance of romance forms and Romantic themes in Scottish fiction has deeply affected the ways in which women are represented. In the last chapter I commented on the way in which the subjective focus of much Scottish fiction reduced women to aspects of male experience, often the sexual aspect, and often unsympathetically viewed. The Romantic and symbolic bias of Scottish writing frequently limits women to conventional or marginal roles.

A more radical impetus in Romanticism does liberate women in certain ways into more active and sympathetic roles; for instance, the Romantic desire to liberate human emotions and sexuality from all forms of repression and oppression sometimes leads to a more

7 Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience:The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition (London, 1957), p. 14.

8 See Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of The Master of Ballantrae', in Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, edited by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 62-87 (p. 68).

sympathetic view of female sexuality. Modern writers, particularly, present female sexuality as a positive force. A Romantic sympathy for, and belief in, 'the feminine' leads also to a greater emphasis on the female figure; although this is often primarily symbolic, there is, in the modern period, a greater interest in exploring the 'feminine' consciousness. This has its dangers, but we do find women realized as individuated characters, sometimes explored from within. Some writers also use Romantic modes with a degree of irony, and view the 'myth' of woman somewhat cautiously. Stevenson in Weir of Hermiston uses, and is yet partly distanced from, the forms and ideas of romance with respect to women. But, while there are such complicated cases, much of the fiction which assigns women to roles in romance structures, or uses them as Romantic symbols, is somewhat limiting in its representation of female characters.

The limitations of the roles assigned to women are particularly apparent in works of 'fantasy' by Scottish writers, and I will discuss the work of George MacDonald and David Lindsay in this respect. Women tend in their fiction to be associated with certain recurring clusters of ideas: nature, the imagination, the past, emotional and moral values; and they often appear as idealized figures. Frequently they symbolize reconciliation, or are associated with moments of insight and truth.

Some writers pursue Romantic themes and use Romantic forms in a specifically Scottish context. Here again various associations persist. Women are linked frequently with the land, and especially

with the Highlands; the Scottish peasant woman is a recurrent figure, often idealized. There are historical and cultural reasons for these persistent associations, some of which have been looked at already in previous chapters, but which will be discussed here more fully with reference particularly to the work of Robert Louis Stevenson and Neil Gunn among others. 'Fiona Macleod' is the most extreme manifestation of a tendency to Romanticize the Highland woman, but the female characters created by Stevenson, and in our own century by Gunn, are more interesting and complex, although there are limitations on the scope they allow their female characters. In some instances, such as that of the older Kirstie Elliot in Weir of Hermiston, or Catrine in The Silver Darlings, the character achieves a three-dimensional quality, but Gunn's ideology with respect to women is often troubling, and requires critical analysis.

Certainly, the wider context of the time should be borne in mind. Fin de siècle attitudes to women, and characteristic modes of representing them, already touched on in this thesis, indicate how women were both idealized and seen as powerful and threatening. The transition from the Victorian into the modern age saw many changes, with women demanding suffrage, and playing an increasingly active role in society, a role to some extent reflected in twentieth-century Scottish fiction, as in fiction elsewhere. The First World War, too, affected Scottish writers, like other Modernist artists. It created a sense of shock and insecurity which perhaps contributes to the way in which many Scottish writers choose to examine their 'origins'. It is interesting that among the leading writers on

myth and civilization at this time were some major Scottish figures, most notably Sir James Frazer, whose work The Golden Bough was so widely influential, but also others, such as Andrew Lang, who wrote Myth, Ritual and Religion, Modern Mythology, and other books on similar subjects. Scottish writers often represent women as Earth Mothers, mythic figures with a timeless quality linked to their roots in the Scottish landscape.

Although this 'mythical' significance attached to women by many Scottish writers is not uniquely Scottish or a response only to Scottish experience, it is important to see figures such as Gunn's Elie and Dark Mairi in Butcher's Broom as on one level symbols of Scotland itself, enduring, if threatened, among so much transience and meaningless violence. Although many Scottish writers absorb influences from other cultures, especially in the twentieth century, they remain characteristically self-conscious about the issue of Scottish identity.[9] Scottish Romanticism is therefore not only an outcome of external influences but of various specifically Scottish cultural and historical factors, and is something nurtured in a self-consciously national dimension.

9 Douglas Gifford states that the so-called Scottish Renaissance in the twentieth century saw the creation of literature which exhibits recurrent features:

> 'The overwhelming unity of the Renaissance movement lies not in any stated shared aims - for these were the matter of frequent quarrels of personality - but in the way the Scottish writers adapted ideas and mythic enquiries to be found in Lawrence, Woolf and Joyce in fiction and Eliot in poetry to the paradoxically more fruitful soil of Scottish living legend, tradition, pre-Christian image.

'In Search of the Scottish Renaissance - The Reprinting of Scottish Fiction', Cencrastus, 9 (Summer 1982), 26-30 (p. 26). I would suggest that in fact Scottish writers were developing certain traits already in Scottish fiction, rather than copying the Modernists.

To be fair, Scottish fiction is not narrowly Romantic; there is a tough 'realist' strain as well. Patricia Stubbs has pointed out that the novel characteristically associates women with emotions and the 'private life' and this, as she says, is because 'the development of the novel has been closely bound up with the social and political position of women'. [10] This, in turn, is related to the idea of the novel as an essentially middle-class form. [11] However, fiction in Scotland has had strong links with folk culture, and many Scottish writers had their origins in that culture. As a result we find female characters in Scottish fiction who are presented in working situations, and who are not merely symbols or idealized figures, but are more fully expressed as strong and resourceful characters in a fictional community. Galt creates a number of interesting characters, such as his midwife in the short story 'The Howdie', to cite but one example. Hogg's female characters are also often equally tough.

It is thus important to stress that Scottish fiction does not only foster Romantic images of women; nevertheless, the tendency to present Scottish women romantically has been a strong one, and has influenced the way Scotland itself is typically seen. Since Ossian stimulated the imagination of the Western world, and since Scott's reign of mastery, the taste for images of a Romantic, feminine Caledonia has been prodigious. Considering the hold such images still have, through the powerful mythology of film as well as the printed word, it is essential to question and analyze

10 Women and Fiction : Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920, (Brighton, 1979), p. x.

11 See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, passim.

more rigorously the Romantic representation of women in Scotland. Some discussion of images of women in other media has begun, and women are voicing discontent with the available images. [12] I intend to offer some discussion of the ways in which women are represented Romantically in Scottish fiction, continuing the reassessment of critical approaches to Romanticism which I began in my chapter on Scott, and offering some speculative assessments.

II

Before turning to look at specific texts, I would like to consider further some of the difficulties which face the critic of Romantic fiction, especially in relation to the representation of women.

Many critics appear confused about the implications of romance and Romanticism for women. Some point out that the female figure is a significant one in Romantic literature. Michael G. Cooke comments:

> The fact that a central social power is at the same time withheld is consonant with the general tenor of the romantic period as a literature of power, with the emphasis on human value and meaning, rather than a literature of power politics too, with the emphasis on formal social relations. Paradoxically, too, women are less bound to repetition and routine, more open to innovation than men, because they are deprived of practical power. [13]

12 Gillian Skirrow, Douglas and Ouainé Bain, 'Woman, Women and Scotland: "Scotch Reels" and Political Perspectives', Cencrastus, 11 (New Year 1983), 3-6.

13 Acts of Inclusion: Studies Bearing on an Elementary Theory of Romanticism (New Haven and London, 1979), p. 120. Cooke also devotes a chapter to 'The Feminine as the Crux of Value'. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Cooke goes on to point out that in many Romantic poems, 'the projection of a new potential... is intrinsically tied up with the feminine figure' (p. 120). It would be all too easy to conclude from these observations that the female role in Romanticism is both central and sympathetic. However, while many of Cooke's observations are interesting, the underlying assumptions in this passage require questioning. Although Romantic literature frequently does not deal with 'social' roles, that does not mean it is divorced from society, nor that its relationship with society is 'innocent'. Cooke notes this implicitly in remarking that women are often used symbolically because their lack of actual power makes them peculiarly open to metaphorical appropriation, but rather than commenting on this as a ratification of female powerlessness, he appears to accept this somewhat simplistically as a signification of the positive evaluation of women. It is disappointing to find critics perpetuating existing values and attitudes under the guise of 'sympathetic' criticism, but writers and critics alike seem unable or unwilling to shake off the effects of convention.

In order to approach the Romantic representation of women in a more questioning and truly critical spirit, it is necessary to re-state the central issues, some of which have been raised in previous chapters, and to pursue these further.

Structurally, the form of the romance, as has been noted, tends to assign women to particular, in some ways limited, roles. Although the male protagonist is not 'realistic' in the novelistic sense with which we are more familiar as modern readers of fiction, he is

nonetheless an active figure. The female role in romance is more usually representative of some aspect of male experience. Particularly significant is the way in which the woman is used as a symbol of permanence. A key moment in the medieval chivalric romance occurs when a glimpse of permanence is afforded:

> throughout the tradition of chivalric romance one is offered moments of divine vision or revelation . At that moment the reader, or protagonist, of chivalric romance- or both- discovers an image of permanence and perfection through the reconciliation of opposites. These versions of stability, of certainty, are so crucial because they are what Romance, at its heart, constantly yearns for. [14]

This moment of vision in romance is often associated with a female figure, being afforded by 'the image of a woman who embodies bliss beyond the reach of change' (p. 21).

The Romantic poets, tormented by the sense of a lost wholeness, also sought images of reconciliation, and the woman is used, as in romance, as a key figure, Women are symbols uniting past and present, man and nature, body and soul. Later still, Yeats embodies similar concerns in the image of the Dancer, 'one of Yeats's great reconciling images, containing life in death, death in life, movement and stillness, action and contemplation, body and soul; in fact all that passionate integrity that was split and destroyed when Descartes, as Yeats puts it, discovered that he could think better in his bed than out of it'. [15]

According to Romantic theory, the image, like the work of art itself, is no mere imitation of nature, but is independent and

14 A. Bartlett Giammatti, 'Spenser: From Magic to Miracle', in Four Essays on Romance, edited by Herschel Baker, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), pp. 15-31 (pp. 17-18). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

15 Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London, 1957), p. 48.

internally cohesive, not mechanically so, but naturally, like an organism. The aesthetic of the Romantic image or symbol emphasizes its lack of intentionality. It is not 'useful' or 'moral' in any deliberately affective sense, the Romantic thinker argues, but is a means to the realization of 'truth'. The Romantic image represents another, higher, order of meaning. Imagination, as the shared experience of humanity, is the key to the truth embodied in the image; Nature is only symbolic of this real order of truth.

It is possible to argue in keeping with this Romantic aesthetic that 'Woman' is eternally present in the mind of man in ideal and hence 'true' form. Since the reality which exists in nature is only the symbolic potential of the 'truth' of imagination, it follows that a woman who diverges from the imaginative concept of 'Woman' is not a true woman, and may be castigated, therefore, for her wilfulness or failure. Yeats demanded, as an extension of this argument, that women should not be educated for fear they would lose bodily grace and cease to exemplify the fusion of body and soul which makes them representative of 'wholeness' and 'truth', writing in one poem that he hoped his daughter would 'think opinions are accursed'. [16]

This is the ideology which lies behind the image of the Dancer. The idea of the woman as a symbol of wholeness might be acceptable if it required merely temporary suspension of disbelief. But it is not merely occasional or aesthetic. The Romantic image of the woman recurs again and again in the work of many writers. The

16 W.B. Yeats, 'A Prayer for My Daughter', Poems, Variorum Edition (New York, 1957), pp. 403-6 (p. 405).

female figure is beautiful, sensuous, and non-intellectual, representing harmony and a vision of truth. In the case of Yeats, this is related to his attitudes to women in society, and it would therefore seem essential to question the underlying framework of ideas.

Critics dealing with such ideas, however, are often liable to accept the underlying vision, either explicitly or implicitly. Twentieth-century 'archetypal' criticism is based on the premise that images in literature are products of a universal imagination. The major exponent of this approach, Northrop Frye, states:

> If archetypes are communicable symbols, and there is a center of archetypes, we should expect to find, at that center, a group of universal symbols. I do not mean by this phrase that there is any archetypal code book which has been memorized by all human societies without exception. I mean that some symbols are images of things common to all men, and therefore have a communicable power which is potentially unlimited. [17]

Although Frye remarks that not all symbols and images fall into this 'universal' category, there seems to be no definite rule establishing which do and which do not.

There have been moves to present a counter-argument, contending in particular that the 'archetypal' image of the woman often found in literature is not, in fact, a 'true' or 'universal' one. Challenges to the idea have notably come from radical thinkers; Roland Barthes has commented: 'Are there objects which are inevitably a source of suggestiveness, as Baudelaire suggested about Woman? Certainly not: one can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternal ones; for it is human history which converts reality into

17 Anatomy of Criticism, p. 118.

speech, and it alone rules the life and death of mythical language'.[18] Daniel Cottom drew our attention to the historical context which produced the conventions of romance.[19] It is not surprising, as he points out, that a male-dominated medieval society should place a male protagonist centrally, and present a male view of reality. Frye himself has remarked that certain conventions which were created by a past society, such as the romance convention of male chastity, have lost their meaning: 'it recedes in twentieth-century romance, in response to a convention that a male hero who would refuse sexual intercourse would be neither believable nor admirable'.[20] Conventions can become outdated, the notion of their universal validity being brought to question by changes wrought by history and shifts in belief and social attitudes.

It is to be expected that the associations surrounding women in the Romantic view, supported by an idealist philosophy, be brought to question by the changing role of women in society, and the philosophical challenges posited by feminism. Rather than accepting the notion of the 'ideal' or 'essential' woman as a standard by which to judge women in reality, it is now being more forcefully argued that we should see this notion itself as a product of history. Created in medieval times, it resurfaces, in the nineteenth century, nurtured by middle-class Victorian society, which assigns

18 'Myth Today', in Mythologies, selected and translated by Annette Lavers (London, 1972), pp. 109-159 (p. 110), from the French Mythologies (Paris, 1957).

19 Daniel Cottom, 'The Waverley Novels: Superstition and the Enchanted Reader', ELH, 47 (1980), 80-102.

20 The Secular Scripture (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), p. 115.

women to a passive role, and projects on to them its dreams and desires. Some critics indicate how potentially damaging such a way of representing women can be, and how even 'radical' Romantic writing often conceals a more conservative ideology regarding women.[21]

Aesthetics and ideology are not separable, and especially in the modern context we should confront this, for unless we do, reactionary myths of 'Woman' will simply be perpetuated, protected by the critical cowardice which maintains them in the name of 'Art'. In the meantime, we need to evolve a critical approach which can challenge accepted ideas without necessarily offering any absolute criteria of judgement. Given the problems of expressing and critically assessing that which cannot be adequately defined, feminist commentary may at times seem somewhat negative in spirit. However, in the following pages, I would hope to be able to offer some more constructive remarks as well.

III

Some of the critical issues which must be confronted are illustrated by consideration of the work of two Scottish writers of 'fantasy', George MacDonald and David Lindsay. Like a number of significant nineteenth-century Scottish writers, they turn away from society in some of their best writing, in a most extreme way.

21 Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (London, 1972), pp. 37-40;
Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature (London, 1981), p. 11;
David Aers, 'Blake: Sex, Society and Ideology', in Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing edited by David Aers, Jonathan Cook and David Punter (London etc. 1981), pp. 27-43.

The lack of obvious social reference in their work reveals the structures contained in it particularly clearly, and the role of the female figure can be directly confronted. Northrop Frye has commented: 'The long-standing association between the words imagination and fancy may suggest that the imaginative, by itself, tends to be fantastic or fanciful. But actually, what the imagination, left to itself, produces is the rigidly conventionalized'.[22] The imagination, however, is never, I would suggest, completely 'left to itself'. No human being, writer or reader, exists in a void. The human imagination is soaked in literary conventions, which are, in turn, products of society.

One critic has pointed out how often fantasy employs the structures and themes of medieval romance, which were, of course, the creation of a particular social formation.[23] George MacDonald's fantasies exemplify the adoption by the fantasy writer of romance structures and themes. In both Phantastes and Lilith the male central characters enact a series of adventures in the mode of the sequential romance, and the female characters they encounter are representative of aspects of their experience.

22 The Secular Scripture, p. 36.

23 Raymond H. Thompson, 'Modern Fantasy and Medieval Romance: A Comparative Study', in The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature, edited by Roger C. Schlobin (Indiana and Brighton, 1982), pp. 211-225 (p. 212); Thompson remarks that 'it is important to realize that the great theme of medieval romance is self-realization', and he quotes A.C. Gibbs, "Introduction" to Middle English Romances (London, 1966), p. 1: '"in the best work, the adventures are not there for their own sake, but to call forth the very essence of the knight's ideal of manhood"'.

The White Lady in Phantastes represents the Romantic ideal, embodied in the female form: 'What I did see, appeared to me more perfectly lovely, more near the face that I had been born with in my soul, than anything I had seen before in nature or art'.[24] It is not surprising, considering the recurrence of such figures in MacDonald's fiction, to find that MacDonald sympathized with the early Romantic aesthetic that the human mind is so constituted as to be able to recognize images of which it can have no previously perceived knowledge:

> For what are the forms by means of which a man may reveal his thoughts? Are they not those of nature? But although he is created in the closest sympathy with these forms, yet even these forms are not born in his mind. What springs there is the perception that this or that form is already an expression of this or that phase of thought or of feeling. For the world around him is an outward figuration of the condition of his mind; an inexhaustible storehouse of forms whence he may choose exponents - the crystal pitchers that shall protect his thought and not need to be broken that the light may break forth. The meanings are in those forms already, else they could be no garment of unveiling.[25]

MacDonald's female 'fantasy' figures are generally drawn from romance convention, and are used to express the idealist philosophy of Romanticism. They are thus the formulation of an author working within an essentially male tradition; and they are created from within a particular historical context, as was remarked in the last chapter.

MacDonald's Romantic belief in the identity of an archetypal femininity was doubtless reinforced more immediately by his perception of the restricted experience of Victorian middle-class

24 George MacDonald, Phantastes : A Faerie Romance for Men and Women (London, 1858), p. 59.

25 George MacDonald, 'The Imagination and its Culture', in Orts (London, 1882), p. 5.

women; the New Woman on the other hand would appear to be going against her 'essential' nature, and would threaten his entire aesthetic, as she did that of Yeats. Lilith, as we saw, illustrates MacDonald's anxiety to chastize the kind of woman in reality who challenges the imaginative ideal of femininity which is so central to his kind of thinking. The fantasy work may appear to construct an alternative world, but it is produced from within our own, and in many instances reveals quite starkly the power relationships which lie more deeply hidden within 'realistic' texts. [26]

The work of fantasy may also usefully be seen as a product of the writer's subconscious. Northrop Frye has commented that 'Romance often deliberately descends into a world obviously related to the human unconscious, and we are not surprised to find that some romances, George MacDonald's Phantastes for instance, are psychological quests carried out in inner space'. [27] We are not, indeed, surprised, but critics do sometimes seem to forget that the figures found in romance have such origins. Rather than representing archetypal womanhood, the female figures of romance often represent men's recurring psychological preoccupations, their attitudes and fears.

The necessity to consider critically the idea of such so-called 'archetypes' is particularly intensified when the problematic issues

26 Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (London and New York, 1981), p. 3, comments 'Like any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context. Though it might struggle against the limits of this context, often being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it'.

27 The Secular Scripture, pp. 57-8.

of violence and sexuality - separately or together - are concerned. Northrop Frye has stated that 'the fact that sex and violence emerge whenever they get a chance does mean that sexuality and violence are central to romance'. [28] Nevertheless, it would be unwise to assume that all expressions of sexuality are of universal reference and significance. Literature by men is likely to be expressive specifically of male sexuality. The equation of sexuality generally with male sexuality implicitly made by Frye is apparent even in his rhetoric when he comments on 'the defensive devices people invent in trying to keep the romantic thrust of sexuality and wish fulfilment under the control of the status quo' (p. 26). (my italics)

Certain literary ideologies would appear to be especially conducive to the expression of certain aspects of sexuality. Mario Praz has commented that 'For the Romantics beauty was enhanced by exactly those qualities which seem to deny it, by those objects which produce horror; the sadder, the more painful it was, the more intensely they relished it'. [29] This idea is also put forward by George MacDonald's favourite writer, Novalis, himself a Romantic writer; '"It is strange that the association of desire, religion, and cruelty should not have immediately attracted men's attention to the intimate relationship which exists between them and to the tendency which they have in common"'. [30]

28 The Secular Scripture, p. 26. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

29 The Romantic Agony (London, 1951), p. 27. All references are to this, the second edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

30 Quoted by Praz, p. 29 from Novalis, Psychologische Fragmente. (Praz does not give further details of source.)

In MacDonald's work certain scenes bear out the idea that these are inter-related concerns, and that they are particularly significant in the work of some Romantics. In Lilith the scene where Lilith has her hand cut off, and her heart is penetrated by the silver worm (Chapters XXXIX and XL), is arguably sexual, (although this is not the manifest 'meaning' of the incident), and it is strikingly cruel. Critics often avoid confronting such a scene , preferring to comment only on the more acceptable theological motivation supposedly lying behind it.

I suggest that this scene represents a masculine perspective on sexuality, and it is, in this instance, a particularly unattractive one. The incident in question makes obvious a tendency in much Romantic literature; the female figure is emblematic of male desire, but also expressive of cruelty. When such a tendency comes too clearly into focus, the critic is justified in judging this as a criterion of value. Daniel Cottom has commented that Scott felt his own novel The Monastery was a failure because the White Maiden of Avenel is too 'obvious':

> Scott sees this novel as a failure for the very reason that so many critics, reading as if enchanted by aristocratic values but unwilling or unable to admit this attitude, have seen much of Lawrence's later work as a failure: because it too explicitly describes a concept, a figure of mastery, disseminated less directly in his other writing. [31]

Where concern with power and 'mastery' extends into the realms of sexuality and violence, the critic should not, I suggest, ignore this, but should take account of such facets of the work in the final analysis. MacDonald's seemingly innocent 'fantasy' work presents a vision which is no less political because its arena is that of sexual politics, or because it appears to 'transcend'

31 Cottom, p. 101.

ordinary reality. At times, as in Lilith, the 'figure' of mastery becomes a little too insistent, and demands serious critical attention.

Such criteria would also appear to be relevant in approaching the work of another Scottish fantasist, David Lindsay, who is now being accorded more attention after a period of neglect, but who is still not generally seen as part of the Scottish canon. [32] Although he lived mainly in England, Lindsay had a Scottish father, and childhood experiences in Scotland may have contributed to his apparent sense of his own Scottishness. His work has affinities with that of other Scottish writers, and Lindsay himself said that the writer who most influenced him was MacDonald. [33] His liking for the work of other Scottish writers, such as Carlyle and Stevenson, especially Stevenson's The Wrecker, further suggests his sense of a Scottish fictional tradition.

Like MacDonald, Lindsay also read widely among the German Romantics, and while a Schopenhaurean pessimism permeates much of his work, cutting across the idealism associated with Romanticism, Lindsay shares MacDonald's tendency to use the structures and conventions of romance in his 'fantasy' works. Like MacDonald's

32 Although his critics are now showing awareness of his Scottish background, this is not always used to advantage. Colin Wilson has remarked that Lindsay's 'clumsiness springs from his Scots rigidity of temperament', introduction to Bernard Sellin, The Life and Works of David Lindsay, translated by Kenneth Gunnell (Cambridge, 1981), p. xiii. Such a comment requires no rebuttal.

33 Gary K. Wolfe, in 'David Lindsay and George MacDonald', Studies in Scottish Literature, 12, 2 (1974), 131-145, draws attention to the similarities between MacDonald and Lindsay.

adult fantasies, Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus takes the structural form of a romance, with its central male protagonist enacting a wandering adventure or quest and encountering a variety of characters along the way, many of whom are female. According to Bernard Sellin, Maskull's journey 'involves the discovery of women, of which he is no doubt more conscious than of the metaphysical quest, which is the real object of the journey. The quest assumes the form of the metaphysics of women'. [34] As women traditionally represent aspects of the protagonist's quest it is misleading to portray them in this way as external factors. However, the female characters encountered by Maskull certainly represent distractions from the 'truth', being in this respect mostly akin to the dark women of romance; Sellin remarks that the name of the planet 'Tormance' suggests both 'Romance' and 'Torment' (p. 115). Female sexuality is one of the main snares on Maskull's journey, but all the females are in some way a false attraction, and there is no woman representing Truth. Sellin suggests that 'Like the Odyssey A Voyage to Arcturus is an epic of triumph over femininity. It is because he rejects Sullenbode that Maskull finds himself granted the revelation of the Sublime' (p. 119); he also points out, usefully, that the name Maskull may suggest 'masculine'. As he goes on to indicate, Maskull is bearded and thickset, very 'masculine', whereas Crystalman the false god, and his followers are 'effeminate' (See p. 125).

In the light of this it is curious to note that critics often commend Lindsay's sympathy for women. Even Sellin, more questioning

34 Bernard Sellin, The Life and Works of David Lindsay, p. 115. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

than most other critics of Lindsay, suggests that 'the "sexual woman" is unquestionably the type who appears to the best advantage throughout Lindsay's writing. A Voyage to Arcturus is as much a discovery of women as it is an imaginary journey' (p. 118). This is a remarkable view to hold (and one perhaps wrongly attributed to Sellin through mistranslation); for while sexual women certainly appear in A Voyage to Arcturus, they are generally represented as evil, weak, threatening or vampirish. Oceaxe, for instance, has a 'will to power', like Lilith, and must be destroyed. [35] Sullenbode seems through her very physical formlessness to represent a kind of essential 'femininity', her sexuality suggested by her lips:

> Maskull stood over her and looked down, deeply interested. He thought he had never seen anything half so feminine. Her flesh was almost melting in its softness. So undeveloped were the facial organs, that they looked scarcely human; only the lips were full, pouting, and expressive. In their richness, these lips seemed like a splash of vivid will on a background of slumbering protoplasm. [36]

Such a figure can scarcely be said to be a 'character', and indeed suggests a somewhat disturbing view of women. Despite this, critics insist that Lindsay understands women. J.B. Pick remarks that Lindsay's representation of women is a positive feature of his work: 'The drive of his simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from 'woman' colours and freshens his whole work. He observes women more closely and clearly than men, and understands them more deeply. He finds all the beauty of 'reality' in them. For him women are reality, as opposed to individuality'. [37]

35 A Voyage to Arcturus, (London, 1920), Chapter IX, p. 83. All references are to this edition.

36 A Voyage to Arcturus, p. 255.

37 In J.B. Pick, Colin Wilson and E.H. Visiak, The Strange Genius of David Lindsay (London, 1970), p. 12. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Pick's opposition between 'reality' as represented by women, and 'individuality' is a strange one; but his suggestion that Lindsay has special insights into the nature of sexuality, and into women, is reiterated by others. Colin Wilson remarks in the same volume that 'Lindsay has put his finger on the root of the male sexual impulse; it satisfies the hunger of the will as food satisfies the hunger of the body' (p. 54). This interpretation of Lindsay's view is not only highly personal, but positively mischievous. Yet even Bernard Sellin, a more enlightened critic, argues that Lindsay has a special understanding of women. He says, 'One cannot fail to be struck by the importance of women in all Lindsay's writing...If male heroes are not absent, it is nevertheless noticeable that they often lack the complexity of their female counterparts. The men are much less animated, as if, to describe his heroines, Lindsay shows himself more subtly psychological, and more interested' (p. 114). This comment might be usefully applied to some of Lindsay's more socially realistic works, but it would appear to be grossly inappropriate in the context of Lindsay's fantasy fictions. These, like MacDonald's fantasies, are essentially conventional. The female characters are not 'women' at all, but symbols, and should not be judged in terms of their 'realism'.

Sellin is at his most perceptive when he points out that Lindsay has a strong tendency to represent 'types' rather than characters. He quotes from Lindsay's Philosophical Notes (Number 247), in which Lindsay claims, 'Women may be divided into three classes; the sexual, the gay, and the dull. The first seek lovers, the second women-friends and society, the third, a home' (p. 118).

This propensity for viewing women as 'types' rather than as individuals lies behind Lindsay's essentially symbolic use of female figures in A Voyage to Arcturus, with its underlying romance form, although a degree of personal neurosis about sex may further influence his presentation of female characters.

Lindsay, writing in the first part of the twentieth century, was also possibly reasserting a traditional role for women in his writing in response to changes that were afoot. Like MacDonald, Lindsay rejects the sexual woman in A Voyage to Arcturus, but he approves of 'the feminine' in its own sphere. The 'true' feminine, according to Lindsay, is essentially maternal, passive and loving. The female figure, presented according to this definition, is given elevated status in the image of the Great Mother in Devil's Tor. Lindsay's belief that Woman's nobility lies in her maternal instincts, and in her feminine suffering, is not unlike that of MacDonald:

> Because a man was rootless, he was first free-moving, then competitive, then hard, merciless, and military; while because a woman was rooted in the Demiurge, she was first sedentary, then attractive, then soft, pacific, and compassionate. But though such a divergence of destinies was to render women practically the inferior creature, men were still for women, not women for men. The roots of women were for a purpose. The sedentariness was to produce ease for child-production. The production was in order that of the souls produced, some might return soon, some later, to the Ancient.... It was a mighty mystery... [38]

Even a brief discussion of the way in which David Lindsay views and represents 'the feminine', suggests, I think, that critics have to a surprising degree approached Lindsay from the wrong direction. They appear to look for 'realism' in works that are essentially symbolic; at the same time they sometimes ignore

38 David Lindsay, Devil's Tor (London, 1932), p. 475.

the psychological and social reasons for Lindsay's attitude to women. Rather than being seen as delivering universal 'truths', Lindsay may most fairly be seen in his historical context, and as a far from infallible individual. Bernard Sellin, to his credit, recognizes that Lindsay's view of women is essentially conservative,[39] but his remarks to this effect have drawn forth a vitriolic response from a reviewer of his book:

> His statement that Lindsay's views "will make members of the Women's Liberation Movement shudder", if true, is true only in a sense that would reveal the imperceptiveness of much Women's Lib arguing. Lindsay is not an anti-feminist writer: his insistence on the profound differences, even antipathies, between the sexes is an attitude far more respectful to women than the pathetic modern pretence that they are simply men with an alternative shape... Sellin's examination of Lindsay's treatment of women - more accurately, of 'the female', a universal fact of which modern women represent on the whole the degenerate shadow - is an important contribution to a study of the topic, but by no means an exhaustive one.[40]

The intolerant tone of this review suggests that there is indeed a real need for a fuller critical analysis, not only of Lindsay's ideology with regard to women, but of the assumptions and ideas which underlie the work both of writers and critics with respect to the representation of women in Scottish fiction. Given the existing critical prejudice, there would seem to be considerable problems for the critic facing such a task. In addition to the problems inherent in discussing Scottish literature there are also arguably particular complexities in Romantic fiction, in which, Robert Kiely argues, 'confrontation and breakdown are not merely fictional themes but structural and stylistic problems'.[41]

39 Sellin, see especially pp. 114-137.

40 J.D. McClure, review of Bernard Sellin, The Life and Works of David Lindsay, Scottish Literary Journal, supplement no. 18 (Autumn 1983), 27-30 (p. 29).

41 The Romantic Novel in England, pp. 1-2.

It is however, important to tackle these issues, since romance and Romanticism are so significant in Scottish fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and not only in works as obviously Romantic in form as those of Lindsay and MacDonald.

When we turn to fiction which is not fantasy, but more 'realistic', there are further issues to be considered. Much Scottish fiction still uses romance structures, or pursues Romantic themes, but in a more 'realistic' context, and the relative roles of romance and 'realism' have to be considered. These matters are of considerable importance in assessing the roles of female characters.

IV

Frye has summed up the problems of fusing literary modes: 'In the course of struggling with a world which is separate from itself, the imagination has to adopt its formulaic units to the demands of that world, to produce what Aristotle calls the probable impossibility. The fundamental technique used is what I call displacement, the adjusting of formulaic structures to a roughly credible context'.[42] Both MacDonald and Lindsay employ the 'formulae' of romance; but in a more 'realistic' context, in which characters generally appear in their social roles and in which some degree of psychological depth or credibility is usually looked for, characters derived essentially from the romance mode sometimes have an uneasy existence.

42 The Secular Scripture, p. 36.

Mary St John in MacDonald's Robert Falconer never quite expands beyond the central 'meaning' of her initial appearance, when Robert thinks he has glimpsed an angel; the modern reader finds little to sustain interest in such a one-dimensional character, in a novel which offers considerable solidity of specification, and which contains more fully realized characters such as old Mrs Falconer.[43] In MacDonald's 'Scottish' novels, the female characters who are most interesting and 'convincing' are those such as Mistress Croale in Sir Gibbie, in whose creation MacDonald departs from romance and aims at a far greater degree of 'social realism'. Mistress Croale speaks a robust Scots, and is a reminder that MacDonald was far more aware of the social problems of his time, such as the poverty of urban life, than readers only acquainted with his fantasy works might imagine.

The female characters in David Lindsay's more 'realistic' novels are certainly more 'sympathetic' than the figures in A Voyage to Arcturus. Both Isbel in The Haunted Woman and Haidee in The Violet Apple are passionate women seeking relationships with men which will transcend the mundane quality and triviality of everyday life. Isbel turns from her nice but limited fiancé to a man who can share her spiritual insights; Haidee lures a sensitive playwright away from his nice but limited fiancée. Both women are presented

43 Rolland Hein comments in The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald (Washington and Michigan, 1982), p. 128, 'The function of young women in the novels also bears close resemblance to that of the marble lady in Phantastes and that of Lona in Lilith. But in the novels MacDonald does not dwell upon his distinctions between pure attraction and bare lust as he did in Phantastes. Apparently Victorian taste could cope with that theme presented in fantasy but would not tolerate it in the more realistic world of the novel. The young women in the novels are pure in heart and noble in ideals, and have a large sensitivity for spiritual values'.

with considerably more sympathy than Lindsay accords to his symbolic feminine figures in A Voyage to Arcturus; but while Lindsay's reactionary views on women are much less apparent in these novels, the strain of fusing the Romantic with the realistic aspects of the fiction makes them ultimately unsatisfactory. Haidee's exotic name (which perhaps echoes Byron) suggests her Romantic function in the plot; she is associated with the yearnings of the hero's nature which do not find satisfaction in his relationship with the more ordinary Grace (her name in this context possibly suggests 'social graces' rather than any religious meaning, although the novel implicitly criticizes religious convention). Haidee's intensity, clumsily conveyed as it is, seems absurd in a solidly realistic social context, peopled by characters in a much more realist mode. While the attempt to fuse the two 'levels' of experience, expressed again in the house metaphor of The Haunted Woman, is an interesting and ambitious one, Lindsay is unable to contain his ideas successfully in a single work, and his novels tend to break down under the weight of symbolic pressure. This is a problem which recurs in Scottish novels, and it often particularly affects the representation of women.

In the works of a number of Scottish writers of the late nineteenth century, the problem of presenting romance structures, and integrating these into a more 'realistically' evoked social context, is handled somewhat differently, and this affects the representation of women. Although Stevenson's fiction characteristically adopts romance forms, his conception of romance excludes female roles almost completely. His fiction is often satisfying within its own limits, but ignores women to a large

extent, and while it evades thus the 'problem' of presenting them altogether, Stevenson's avoidance of women in his fiction is sometimes remarked upon as a weakness. Stevenson, like other Scottish writers, was interested in presenting 'archetypal' actions, but his conception of 'archetypal' actions does not include a role for women; in an essay in which he extols romance over the limitations of realist fiction he says, 'Thus novels begin to touch not the fair dilettanti but the gross mass of mankind, when they leave off to speak of parlours and shades of manner and still-born niceties of motive, and begin to deal with fighting, sailoring, adventure, death or child-birth'. [44] Although he here evinces a critical attitude to the restrictions of bourgeois society, Stevenson is still himself limited by social and literary conventions of his time, which make him unable to imagine any 'universally' significant role for women other than being brought to childbed.

In the middle-class Victorian world women were debarred from the more 'thrilling' kinds of adventurous experience which for Stevenson make up the 'archetypal' world to which the imagination has universal access, and which offers escape from the restrictions of mundane reality. Thus there are few women in his famous fictional works Treasure Island and Kidnapped. Furthermore, Stevenson's world of Romantic enchantment is a boyhood world. He adapts the essential romance forms to a presentation of the 'real world', but the adventures of his protagonists are generally a boy's adventures, excluding the adult sexual aspects of experience altogether and hence excluding women. There is a useful comparison with J.M. Barrie here, in his children's book generally known as

44 'Pastoral' in Memories and Portraits, Works, XXV, pp. 53-61 (p. 59).

Peter Pan, originally published as Peter and Wendy.[45] Barrie's fantasy, like Stevenson's romances, is limited both by its perceptions of the society from within which it is written, and by its masculine conception of what constitutes 'enchantment'. There are female characters in Peter Pan, but they are actively associated with the restrictions of reality, which is, significantly enough, situated in middle-class London.[46]

Barrie's solid world of 'reality' is presided over by the mother: 'It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day... It is quite like tidying up drawers'.[47] The flight to the Neverland is to a world of enchantment, of imagination, to which children have access, and which adults are no longer able to reach. It is interesting to note, however, that it is peopled only by 'lost boys'; there are no lost girls. The world of imagination is experienced mostly by the male. Even Wendy, who is the main protagonist from the 'real' world, enacts on the island almost precisely the role her mother

45 There may be cultural reasons for the persistent concern with boyhood among Scottish writers, which runs through Stevenson and Barrie to the work of Neil Gunn. It may be due to an identification of imaginative freedom with the life of childhood, a familiar Romantic notion; or it may be in part due to a looking back to the past in order to locate identity, especially national identity. It is interesting to note the number of works of 'adventure' fiction, or fiction for children, produced by Scottish writers. Notable names are of course John Buchan, and less obviously, R.M. Ballantyne of Coral Island fame.

46 This is particularly significant since Barrie himself was a native not of Kensington but of Kirriemuir, where female roles were a little different, as is evident from Auld Licht Idylls and A Window in Thrums.

47 J.M. Barrie, Peter and Wendy, The Kirriemuir Edition (London, 1913), pp. 6-7. First published 1911.

plays in reality. The girl is shown as choosing to experience in her imagination exactly what a woman does experience in 'reality'. Furthermore, Wendy is shown as always trying to tame and domesticate Peter. Thus, a woman's imaginative experience is presented as essentially tethered to mundane reality and as potentially threatening to male longings for imaginative freedom.

Certainly Peter Pan contains some incisive commentary on the nature of 'romance'. The childhood world of imagination is shown to be a violent and cruel place. Barrie also includes some ironic undercuttings of his own work; Tinkerbell, for instance, is impatient with Peter's lack of sexual interest, and this may be a comment on Barrie's work and even on Barrie himself, as well as on the way in which Victorian society tried to etherealize sexual women, to their frequent frustration. At the same time, Tinkerbell's jealousy and continuing need to belong to Peter reinforce the more reactionary elements of the story regarding women. Barrie's world of imagination is, despite its 'enchanting' properties, in many ways a reflection of the real world and its roles for women, but these limited social roles are presented as universally feminine. Hence, women are shown as essentially limited.

It is because the female role was similarly not seen to be interesting from an archetypal point of view that, as has been remarked, Stevenson's early works contain few female characters; women are trapped in the parlour in the role of mother perhaps, and often do not appear at all. Alison Graeme, in The Master of Ballantrae, is only glimpsed in her role as wife and heiress, mediated through the consciousness of the unsympathetic Mackellar. Nevertheless,

Alison is shown to be spirited and discontented, even within the confines of her fictional straitjacket, and she plays a key part in the action through her ambiguous relations with the two brothers, and the riddle of her son's paternity. Stevenson did not in fact lack interest in women, and conscious of the paucity of female characters in his fiction, consciously set about to rectify this lack. In Kidnapped he had offered a symbolic analysis of Scotland fictionalized as masculine in the images of Alan and David; now he set about to suggest a female dimension in Catriona. Yet while in Alison Graeme we glimpse an interesting and original character, in Catriona Stevenson turns again to romance, and although the female presence is now admitted it is drawn from the romance mode, and limited by it. Catriona, furthermore, deals most significantly with moral and 'realist' issues, and the book suffers as a result of the conflicting nature of its concerns.

As Hart says, 'the book is deeply divided between the exuberant, juvenile intensity of its romantic love interest, and the dour, argumentative quality of its cynical political morality'.[48] Catriona's own place in this is an uneasy one. Hart's comments on this are very telling: 'Catriona is far from the most interesting feature of David's adventures. The book's most powerful and persuasive figure is the Lord Advocate Grant of Prestongrange.... In a world under such controls, the romance of winning Catriona must seem insulated and domestic' (p. 161). There is, in fact, no final reason why the winning of Catriona must seem 'insulated and

48 The Scottish Novel, p. 161. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

domestic': one goal of romance is, conventionally, to achieve the fulfilment of a love relationship, symbolizing harmony. The phraseology adopted by Hart here also attaches judgements to the notion of 'domesticity', revealing the critic's partisan view. It is assumed that 'private' life is necessarily more trivial and dull than 'public' life, which would be an unfortunate criterion to bring for instance to Jane Austen.[49] However, while Hart's assumptions are questionable, it is certainly difficult to argue with respect to Catriona that Catriona herself is the vital figure that the title suggests. It seems fair to argue that Stevenson's main interest in Catriona is in complex moral issues of 'conduct' rather than 'circumstance', that is, in Stevenson's own definition, in 'realist' affairs; and Catriona is not successfully integrated into this.

Although ostensibly this novel has a specific and detailed historical context, Catriona herself is a figure from what Northrop Frye would call 'the analogy of innocence'; innocence is a preoccupation developing out of the romance concept of the ideal, and 'best known to us not from the age of romance itself, but from later romanticizings'.[50] In much Romantic literature which has this

49 A feminist point might be made, as it is by Virginia Woolf:
'it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are "important"; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes "trivial". And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book,the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room. A scene in a battle-field is more important than a scene in a shop - everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists'.
A Room of One's Own (London, 1929), pp. 110-111.

50 Anatomy of Criticism, p. 151. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

concern, as Frye remarks, 'children are prominent, and so is the virtue most closely associated with childhood and the state of innocence - chastity, a virtue which in this structure of imagery usually includes virginity...It is easiest to associate with young women' (p. 151). There may be cultural reasons for the concern with innocence shown by Stevenson and other Scottish writers; it might be argued that this is at least partly due to a reaction against the Calvinist view of man (and especially woman) as a fallen animal. Certainly, Stevenson does try to present Catriona's innocence as itself an issue. She is the daughter of a deeply corrupt father, and the novel emphasizes the contrast between them; David is also strongly aware of a sense of responsibility towards Catriona, as her guardian in Leyden in the last section of the novel. The woman's innocence and vulnerability are thus made thematically significant, as is also the case with young Kirstie in Weir of Hermiston. However, Catriona is, in her innocence, a catalyst rather than a protagonist, existing by the problems she raises in a 'realistic' world of intense moral issues, rather than by any intrinsic psychological depth or interest of her own. Catriona herself has no greatly developed consciousness. The problem for the author is in integrating such a character into the complex world of psychology and morality, and in Catriona, Stevenson does not fully succeed in meshing his fictional modes.

Furthermore, the characterization of Catriona raises some of the problems more immediately surrounding a character like Winsome Charteris in S.R. Crockett's The Lilac Sunbonnet. Winsome demonstrates the tendencies implicit in the role of the Romantic 'innocent': it can

lead to sentimentality. Winsome, indeed, actually has a degree of sexual presence completely lacking in Catriona (although briefly glimpsed in Barbara Grant), but Crockett does not present this seriously. The place of sentimentality in literature may be defended, and of course it cannot be ignored in the work of many great Victorian writers such as Dickens and George Eliot. Yet while F.R. Hart has tried stoutly to defend the sentimentality of kailyard fiction, [51] it clearly has its limitations. Without an awareness of more vigorous images counterbalancing the romantic and sentimental ones of late Victorian fiction in Scotland, one might be forgiven for imagining that Scotland was a male province, where women only appear as ghosts, visions or coy young girls.

The female characters in Scottish fiction appear to raise particularly thorny problems, although analogous issues can be pinpointed in English fiction. Some critics have, for instance, discussed the unsatisfactory characterization of Hetty Sorrel in George Eliot's Adam Bede; she is out of place in her context because 'she is an inhabitant of the pastoral world who has strayed into the world of moral enquiry and tragic destiny'. [52] The Scottish novel, however, is arguably riven by particular tensions, as F.R. Hart has suggested. The characters in Scottish fiction are often torn between conflicting modes, or overburdened with roles often because of issues related to national identity:

51 The Scottish Novel, pp. 115-130.

52 Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, The Moral and the Story (London, 1962), p. 26.

> Central characters from Scott, Galt, and Lockhart on seem burdened with various determinants of significance. They belong to a traditional community that favors individuality; "character", even eccentricity, is the stuff of legendary, hence communal, survival. They must also play generic roles in cultural history. Yet, so persistent are the absolutes of romance or myth that they must also carry or discover archetypal roles. [53]

The complex and sometimes confused roles assigned to female characters in Scottish fiction are perhaps attributable in some degree to the special cultural difficulties faced by Scottish writers, difficulties comparable to those faced by Hardy, [54] and yet compounded by a further range of national issues. The tensions of Scottish fiction demand the critic's awareness of the various strands in the cultural tradition, which may clash, or interact in particularly complex ways.

Thomas Crawford has remarked of Scott that he created very vigorous female characters, and comments:

> The fact remains that the type of novel he chose to write - the adventurous novel of action; and the type of tradition in which he felt most at home - the tradition of folk and popular art - inevitably forced him to place his womenfolk in situations of danger, or circumstances where they could aid their lovers by bold and resolute action. [55]

The influence of folk culture in Scottish fiction has been significant and multi-faceted. It has certainly contributed to the representation of women as strong, independent and sexual beings.

53 The Scottish Novel, p. 404.
Marilyn Butler also comments on the different tendencies in Scottish fiction in the nineteenth century, towards documentation on the one hand, and towards subjectivity of presentation on the other; Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, pp. 161-2.

54 See Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory (London, 1976), p. 131. Eagleton relates the tensions in Hardy's fictions to his situation as a literary producer in a cultural context.

55 Scott (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 77.

The Scottish woman of the people is no mere symbol, but is often shown in her working life, too. In these ways, folk culture may be seen as offering a degree of 'realism' in Scottish fiction.

Romance, it has been suggested, tends to assign women to passive or supportive and largely symbolic roles, yet critics often argue that Romanticism is 'revolutionary', while realism is seen as innately conservative. According to Northrop Frye, again, 'There is a strongly conservative element at the core of realism, an acceptance of society in its present structure, an attitude of mind that helps to make Balzac typical of realism, just as the opposite revolutionary attitude helps to make Victor Hugo typical of romanticism'. [56]

Certainly, the romance structure can be used in such a way as to become potentially revolutionary for women, as is seen in The Heart of Midlothian, where Jeanie plays a traditionally male questing role, and is also associated with certain Romantic values which in this context are upheld and shown as socially subversive. Nevertheless, it may be argued that it is partly her peasant origins which make Jeanie what she is, and that a degree of 'realism' of this kind in Scottish fiction more generally may be a valuable counter to the Romanticism which is so prevalent in the representation of women, and which is so often limiting in its effects. A referential structure can act as a useful reminder of the social realities of women's lives, and the folk tradition, with its greater earthiness and its roots in working life can provide this.

56 The Secular Scripture, p. 164.

Yet it is this very folk culture which is often taken over and assimilated into Romanticism. The Scottish woman of the people, who represents so much that Romanticism ignores or denies, is idealized and desexualized by Romanticism, and thus loses much of her vigour and 'realism'. The adoption of the 'adventure' mode, too, which in Scott's hands was an opportunity to show spirited female characters, does not always mean the creation of such interesting female characters. Later writers produce very different images of women, despite their use of 'popular' forms and subjects.

The folk, and especially the woman of the folk, becomes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a central subject of Romanticism, and this should be seen as one manifestation of a wide interest in nature and the primitive, which in Scotland has particular significance. It is worth considering these ideas generally in relation to nineteenth and twentieth century Scottish fiction, before attempting more detailed discussion of specific texts.

V

Writers in Scotland, like writers elsewhere, reacted against the Enlightenment, which cut them off from the traditions by which they had lived and made sense of experience. There had been, as Frye puts it, 'a sense of an original identity between the individual man and nature which has been lost'. [57] The resulting sense of loss suggests the analogy, especially apt in Presbyterian Scotland, with the previously held myth of the Fall: 'The alienated man cut off from

57 A Study of English Romanticism (New York, 1968), p. 17. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

nature by his consciousness is the Romantic equivalent of post-Edenic Adam' (p. 18). The woman, traditionally associated with nature, and expressly so in the writings of Rousseau, offers to the male poet an embodiment of reconciliation with that from which he has become separated. This leads to the significant appearance of the female figure in Romantic mythology, in the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley, in Blake and even Byron: 'The Romantic redemption myth then becomes a recovery of the original identity. For the sense of an original unity with nature, which being born as a subjective consciousness has broken, the obvious symbol is the mother. The lost paradise becomes really an unborn world, a pre-existent ideal' (p. 18). The mother figure is a key recurring motif, as is that of the bride. The image of woman, linked with nature, is particularly prominent in much nineteenth and twentieth-century Scottish fiction. As we saw in the case of Scott's Madge Wildfire, a number of different meanings of 'nature' have to be taken into account, and nature is associated with a range of other related ideas: time, the community and the individual.

For Scott, as for Enlightenment thinkers, the river of time is a river of progress;[58] subsequent Scottish writers, however, in Romantic style, reject the idea of progress, seeking instead a return to the source, which is in nature. In a novel which uses the river metaphor again, for instance, MacDonald's Sir Gibbie retraces the river back from the city to its source in the Scottish landscape, to find his identity. It is only once he has completed this journey that Sir Gibbie finds his bride and achieves wholeness. Often, as

58 Walter Scott, Waverley, II, p. 364.

in The Drinking Well, the natural source is symbolized by a woman. In Gunn's Highland River, too, Kenn's modern questing self takes him finally to the source of the river that represents his search. In Highland River, Kenn's disappointment in the source itself is a reminder of the sheer physicality of nature: 'And here it was coming out of the earth itself. The realism mocked him. He had actually thought of a loch with shores of sand and water grey in the evening light. Coming out of a black hole in the earth like life itself. A hole that was like death. Life and death in ooze'.[59] Despite the spiritual aspect of his quest, Kenn's source is in the earth, and the dual nature of this source, in which nature is imaged as both life and death, suggests the ambivalence with which nature may be viewed; it is both creative and destructive.

Mother Nature may be benevolent or threatening, as is the woman, but in Scottish fiction after Scott, in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially, nature - the woman - is usually presented as benign and fertile, offering an alternative to the sterilities of modern civilization. My use of the sexual metaphor here is not accidental; nature is more often than not evoked explicitly as female and sexual. Raymond Williams has pointed out that a concern with nature developed into a recurrent mode of English writing featuring an identification of nature with sexuality that has its roots in Romanticism, but develops further the sexual connotations of nature imagery: 'This now conscious intercourse with the Earth became, in its fusion of agricultural and sexual imagery (see Lawrence's descriptions of ploughing and milking in the first chapter of The Rainbow) a dominant mode; dominant also in the special

59 Neil Gunn, Highland River (Edinburgh, 1937), pp. 342-3. All references are to this edition.

sense that the imagery is male, to the female Earth'.[60] In this kind of writing, nature is shown as regenerative, in contrast with the barren city. As Williams remarks, it is the so-called 'regional novel' which most persistently manifests this kind of interest; the fertile rural world is often rather simply contrasted with a barely evoked outside world without any real consideration of change within the region, although novels such as Wuthering Heights, Adam Bede and Tess of the D'Urbervilles, all explore tensions and ambiguities (pp. 252-3).

The simpler kind of rural fiction described by Williams might in the Scottish context be described as 'kailyard'; but the sexual imagery of nature is developed more fully in other fictional works which appear in Scotland well into the twentieth century, long after Lawrence. The persistent appearance of nature as a central idea in Scottish fiction may be partly attributable to the continued importance of rural and agricultural lifestyles in Scotland, where many writers have come from rural backgrounds. However, in this 'region', the land itself has a special link with national identity. In his essay 'The Land' James Leslie Mitchell described his feelings for the land,[61] which in A Scots Quair is closely associated with Scottish identity. There the land is described in terms of a female body, as it is again in the work of Neil Gunn in Butcher's Broom, where the central characters are peasant women.

60 The Country and the City (London, 1973), p. 251. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

61 'The Land', in Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Hugh McDiarmid, Scottish Scene:or the Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn (London, 1934), pp. 292-306.

The peasantry, being close to nature, are key Romantic figures. The Romantic idea of the innocent and spontaneous peasant, fostered in the eighteenth century, as we saw earlier, offered an appealing image to counter the rationality of the Enlightenment, and the uncertainties of Scottish history and identity, and one even more powerful when conflated with the female figure. For this reason, the image of the Scottish peasant woman is a key one in Scottish fiction, sentimentalized in the kailyard, and often elevated to mythic status in more modern novels. The female peasant figure is often linked too to the idea of local community. F.R. Hart has indicated the centrality of the idea of 'community' in Scottish fiction, where, he suggests, 'history, in its public guise, is an arbitrary, external force that invades the close communities of real life. "Real" history is local and domestic, subsisting in lore or in personal relationships that public history ignores or discredits'.[62] This is partly a development of Scott's focus on the 'enduring' lives of the local peasantry, who persist while the 'great' folk around them clash in large but passing conflicts. The small rural community is often represented almost in opposition to the idea of history, as if the peasant existed in a timeless dimension.

The emphasis on local community may also be seen as part of a wider resistance to the changes in society brought about by the industrial and agricultural revolutions. The notion of community as a humane and integrated way of living is one which concerned many nineteenth-century thinkers. F. Tönnies, for instance, published an influential paper in 1887, in which he opposed the concept of

62 The Scottish Novel, p. 401.

'Gemeinschaft' to that of 'Gesellschaft': 'Gemeinschaft (community)... is the lasting and genuine form of living together. In contrast to Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft (society) is transitory and superficial. Accordingly, Gemeinschaft (community) should be understood as a living organism, Gesellschaft (society) as a mechanical aggregate and artifact'. [63] The idea of the organic community is important in Scottish fiction and while it is true that small Scottish communities are likely to be more close-knit than large conurbations, the image of community is often less a representation of 'reality' than a symbol of wholeness in the work of, for instance, Mac Colla, Macpherson and Gunn, in the twentieth century, where it is sometimes associated with a key female figure.

Tönnies's theory of community extends to the contrasted qualities of men and women; according to Tönnies, only men are capable of logical, rational thought, and are intellectual, while women are emotional, imaginative and spontaneous. Tönnies therefore identifies women with the idea of 'Gemeinschaft', because, he says, the life and work of the 'community' is especially suited to women. Art, too, is associated with 'feminine-natural' work, and hence the life of the community; following from this, 'the most general artistic mind of the common people, which expresses itself in trinket, song, and story, is carried by the girlish mind, mother love, female memory, superstition, and premonition'. [64] It is evident how through a process of association 'folklore' has become generally associated with women, and indeed the 'essence' of local identity is

63 Quoted by Malcolm Chapman, The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture (London and Montreal, 1978), p. 110, from F. Tönnies, Community and Association (London, 1955), p. 39. Originally published as Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, 1887.

64 Quoted by Chapman, p. 110.

often represented in Scottish fiction as female.

The contrast between the rural community and the capitalist utilitarian society is often made in English literature in what Raymond Williams describes as 'a familiar vein of retrospective radicalism'.[65] In Scotland, however, the notion of local community and its tradition has special national significance:

> If we read the literature of Ireland and Scotland and Wales, into the twentieth century, we find ways of life that are hardly present in the English villages after the eighteenth-century changes. But this difference can be exaggerated. It has as much to do with a system of absentee and alien landlords, and with a strongly surviving national and community sense, as with the economic differences which are accentuated by the facts of marginal land.... Different versions of community have persisted longer, nourished by and nourishing specific national feelings. (p. 269)

The female figure representing local identity in Scottish fiction is thus a figure often representing national identity. The spirit of Scottish community is personified in Jeanie Deans, less magnificently in Maclaren's Marget Howe and George MacDonald's Annie Anderson in Alec Forbes of Howglen, each of whom may be seen in terms of their Scottish significance. While some characters such as Jeanie Deans, are used to criticize the Establishment and metropolitan society in quite radical ways, a more reactionary effect can also, often unconsciously, be perpetrated. Although sympathetically presented, the limited nature of the qualities attributed to the rural community as to the woman, and, as Malcolm Chapman discusses, to the Celt, can in real life be used as justification for political and economic marginalization and even oppression. For this reason

65 The Country and the City (London, 1973), p. 35. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

it is necessary to be wary in assessing the radicalism of such figures in Scottish fiction. [66]

Sometimes the spirit of community and of national identity is presented instead in the person of 'the dispossessed, the lonely wanderer, the vagrant'. [67] Such characters, as we saw in Scott's fiction in the case of Madge Wildfire, are closely linked with nature, which, besides its physical presence is also associated with 'the sublime'. The wild uncultivated Scottish landscape suggested the sublime to eighteenth-century Romantics, and the link between them has remained. Characters representing this aspect of nature are sometimes shown as having a particular power, for 'from the sublime develops the sense of nature as oracular, as dropping hints of expanding mysteries into the narrowed rational consciousness'. [68] It is not, of course, coincidental that it is female characters who most often serve this oracular function. Women are traditionally perceived as having fundamentally different characteristics from men, and Yeats, like the earlier Romantics, stresses the idea that women have access to a deeper truth:

> Women come more easily than men to that wisdom which ancient peoples, and all wild peoples even now, think the only wisdom. The self, which is the foundation of our knowledge, is broken in pieces by foolishness, and is forgotten in the sudden emotions of women, and therefore fools may get, and women do get of a certainty, glimpses of much that sanctity finds at the end of its painful journey. [69]

66 See Chapman, p. 107. Implicit criticism of the idealization of local community and identity is, of course, made in some Scottish novels, such as George Douglas Brown's The House with the Green Shutters and J. MacDougall Hay's Gillespie, discussed more fully in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

67 Williams, The Country and the City, p. 130.

68 Frye, A Study of English Romanticism, p. 28.

69 W.B. Yeats, quoted by Chapman, p. 105. from The Celtic Twilight, first published in 1893, reprinted in Mythologies (London, 1959).

Women, like the 'noble savage' are idealized, but at the same time, their supposedly admirable innocence and perceptiveness are seen to be dependent on a loss of self, and 'foolishness'. The idea of femininity being definable in these terms recurs and raises serious problems. The ideological acceptability of such ideas is questionable; as is demonstrated by Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent, for example. Most critics agree that this novel is problematic in its presentation of the need for female self-abnegation. Some Scottish novels of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries are similarly challenging for the critic.

The difficulty of creating a character who embodies and conveys a sense of 'oracular mysteries' presents other problems for writer and critic. This is apparent when we consider some of Wordsworth's less successful solitaries, such as Simon Lee, with his swollen ankles, or the Idiot Boy, or indeed Walter Scott's 'mediumistic' heroine, Lucy Ashton. Attempts to create mysterious figures, and at the same time focus on the details of simple lives can lead to bathos or absurdity, or to an impossible tension between surface realism and a heavy symbolic function, and these problems are apparent in some Scottish novels. Writers deal with all these concerns and with these various problems in a variety of different ways. One of the most important writers to do this is Robert Louis Stevenson.

VI

Among the most interesting works to contain and explore these concerns is Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston. Poised tensely and perhaps not wholly satisfactorily between different modes, this

unfinished novel, however, exhibits a subtlety of narrative technique and a degree of ambivalence regarding Romantic views of women and nature that make it both complex and interesting. Weir of Hermiston is at once 'realistic' and symbolic, and neither aspect of the work can be ignored. It is 'realistic' in its careful and sensuous evocation of a specific environment and time, and of people; but the characters also exist in a symbolic dimension, representing aspects of a national fable, which uses romance as a structuring principle. The protagonist, Archie, has a 'realistic' existence, and the novel focuses on the moral and emotional dilemmas facing the young man as he grows up. The other characters have, to differing degrees, an independent 'realistic' existence, and serve also as symbols of aspects of the Scotland which he confronts.

There is a certain tension between the different modes with which Stevenson is working in this novel; the older Kirstie, for instance, with her more fully realized psychology, has a very different kind of existence from the Four Brothers who draw their 'meaning' rather from the ballad or morality tale. However, the novel is very interesting for its representation of women, particularly when seen against the background of Romantic associations between women and nature already discussed, and in its use of Romantic convention. The two Kirsties clearly derive from the romance idea of the two heroines, but neither can be straightforwardly assimilated to this mode. Certainly, we have a blonde and a dark heroine, each representing an aspect of the hero's experience and bearing the same name, 'Kirstie', suggesting they are two halves of one whole; but the two Kirsties are more complex characters than this would suggest. The two women are not simply

polarized in romance terms, despite a certain enmity between them; indeed their roles are partially reversed. The blonde woman is in some ways more sexual, and is not only a much older woman, but a very forceful one. Her role is also unusual in romance terms in that it is she who 'pursues' the hero, although of course this is an oversimplification of a narrative that is more complex in moral and psychological terms than is the traditional romance. The narrative technique of the novel provides a framework contextualizing character roles and undermining any simple reading.

The younger Kirstie (referred to after this as Christina to avoid confusion) may seem at first sight a somewhat conventional romance heroine, resembling Catriona with all her limitations. It is hardly surprising that critics have seen in her a somewhat sentimental creation. Douglas Gifford has commented that young Christina eating sugar-bools in church is perilously kin to the winsome lassies of kailyard fiction. [70] Certainly, Christina is young and innocent, she has no sophisticated consciousness, and is associated with attractive aspects of the natural world. However, K.G. Simpson has argued convincingly that the narrative techniques of Weir of Hermiston reflect the thematic concerns of the novel, with its exploration of the concept of judgement; [71] and although Simpson considers the novel to be ultimately unsatisfactory, I suggest that the presentation of Christina is more interesting and complex than Gifford allows.

70 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction', p. 64.

71 'Author and Narrator in Weir of Hermiston', in Robert Louis Stevenson, edited by Andrew Noble (London and New Jersey, 1983), pp. 202-227.

Christina in church may indeed seem a somewhat superficial and snobbish young lady, but I suggest Stevenson intends us to see her as such, and the presentation of her creates and allows for a response that is both critical and sympathetic. Description of Christina's smart outfit, for instance, is juxtaposed with an account of Mrs Hob's response to it: '"A jaiket that'll no' meet! Whaur's the sense of a jaiket that'll no' button upon ye, if it should come to be weet?"' [72] This 'sensible' attitude draws our attention to Christina's youthful vanity; it should also be noted that Christina, for all her fancy clothes, speaks Scots, although she would like Archie to address her as 'Christina'. Her use of Scots makes her a less 'genteel' and conventional character than, say Scott's Rose Bradwardine, and it also contextualizes her snobbish pretensions. As Simpson remarks of one incident in the novel:

> It is not only Christina's attitude that is in flux here: the narrator's own attitude is a composite one, as the fluctuation between amusement and sympathy indicates. The treatment of the romance between Archie and Christina is not Kailyard. Stevenson's narrator does not suppress the 'sugar bool' incident: he chooses to present it (when he could have omitted it) because it enables him to demonstrate his amused sympathy. And, to a large extent, Weir is about the narrator's attitude to his subjects. [73]

The narrator's attitude to his subjects seems to me to be linked to his attitude to literary and social conventions. The novel itself both uses and comments on the conventions of romance and Romanticism. Christina in church is described as a beautiful and natural creature;

72 Weir of Hermiston, Skerryvore Edition (London, 1925), XIV, p. 83. All references to Stevenson's work are to this collected edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

73 Simpson, 'Author and Narrator in Weir of Hermiston'. p. 211.

It is unclear whether the perception of her as having the eye of a stag (p. 84) is the narrator's or Archie's, but the description is presented in a context that conditions the reader's response. We have just been presented with Archie's frame of mind as he enters the church. It is after the long passage describing Archie's sensuous and emotional response to the natural world that he spies Christina; and at the moment of perceiving her, he is already deeply moved. The reader, aware of Archie's state of mind, is able to see that Archie, as a romantic young man, is emotionally and psychologically predisposed to see Christina in the light of his own desires and needs. He sees in her the beauty and vividness of nature. Obviously, Christina is meant to be seen as a lovely young woman; but her 'natural' quality does not lie where it is most obvious. Her clothes, the nosegay of primroses, the cairngorm brooch, the violet shoes, the garland of French roses, all may seem 'natural', but they are in fact the products of artifice, for Christina's appearance is a studied one, her outfit carefully put together. She is well aware of Archie's response to her:

> Dandie's sister, sitting by the side of Clem in her new Glasgow finery, chose that moment to observe the young laird. Aware of the stir of his entrance, the little formalist had kept her eyes fastened and her face prettily composed during the prayer. It was not hypocrisy, there was no one further from a hypocrite. The girl had been taught to behave: to look up, to look down, to look unconscious, to look seriously impressed in church, and in every conjuncture to look her best. That was the game of female life, and she played it frankly (p. 81).

There is clearly an ironic tone to the phrase, 'the little formalist', and the passage as a whole indicates the extent to which Christina is a product of social convention. She may look like 'an open flower' (p. 84), but she is not as simple and natural as that. It is in those aspects of herself which are not studied, but are no

source of pride to her that her true closeness to a life-giving nature lies. The blushing of which she is ashamed, the feelings which she denies, her acute embarrassment, these are genuine, and it is these which are so sympathetically described by the narrator. This episode makes it clear that Archie and Christina are socially conditioned to respond to one another in certain ways. This exposure of the conventionality of their attitudes, which are the very stuff of sentimentality, controverts the idea that this is a sentimental scene. At the same time, it does not mean that their feelings for one another are not to be seen as genuine, and worthy of sympathy.

The complexity of this episode derives in part from Stevenson's awareness of the pressure of social and literary convention with regard to the nature and behaviour of young women. In a famous essay he commends George Eliot's depiction of Rosamund Vincy and remarks,

> The satire was much wanted for the education of young men. That doctrine of the excellence of women, however chivalrous, is cowardly as well as false. It is better to face the fact, and know, when you marry, that you take into your life a creature of equal if of unlike, frailties; whose weak human heart beats no more tunefully than yours.
>
> But it is the object of a liberal education not only to obscure the knowledge of one sex by another, but to magnify the natural differences between the two. Man is a creature who lives not upon bread alone, but principally by catchwords; and the little rift between the sexes is astonishingly widened by simply teaching one set of catchwords to the girls and another to the boys. [74]

In Weir of Hermiston Stevenson presents and comments on, the effects of such conditioning, and this is not unimportant for a

74 "Virginibus Puerisque" in "Virginibus Puerisque", Works, XXII, pp. 3-46 (p. 23).

reading of the novel as a whole, for the pressures of expectation contribute to the growth of the relationship between Christina and Archie, contribute to its destruction and ultimately, therefore, to the tragic situation which finally arises.

However, the very conventionality of Christina's literary persona and her outlook pose problems for Stevenson, of which he seems to be aware. She might too readily seem merely a stereotype; how is he to express her 'real', living personality, in a work intended to engage our emotional and moral sympathies? It is also important for Stevenson to make it clear that she is not shallow, as she might too easily seem to be. The narrator describes Christina lying in the loft thinking about Archie, and comments:

> Had a doctor of medicine come into that loft, he would have diagnosed a healthy, well-developed, eminently vivacious lass lying on her face in a fit of the sulks; not one who had just contracted, or was just contracting a mortal sickness of the mind which should yet carry her towards death and despair. Had it been a doctor of psychology, he might have been pardoned for divining in the girl a passion of childish vanity, self-love in excelsis, and no more. It is to be understood that I have been painting chaos and describing the inarticulate. Every lineament that appears is too precise, almost every word used too strong. Take a finger-post in the mountains on a day of rolling mists; I have but copied the names that appear upon the pointers, the names of definite and famous cities far distant, and now perhaps basking in sunshine; but Christina remained all these hours, as it were, at the foot of the post itself, not moving, and enveloped in mutable and blinding wreaths of haze (p. 92).

At this stage the narrator has just finished describing, at some length, Christina's sensations and thoughts. As if aware of his failure to 'bring her alive', and aware he is in danger of showing her merely as a superficial young girl, he now asserts the impossibility of expressing Christina herself, using imagery in a most interesting way. In suggesting that Christina may be seen from

a variety of perspectives, each equally valid, the narrator indicates that Christina cannot be reduced to any single summation; she cannot be articulated. The narrator may provide signs, but Christina remains 'at the foot of the post itself', ultimately unnameable, unsignifiable, outwith the range of expressible symbols. This awareness of the complexity of the woman, this refusal to present her merely as a symbol or cipher indicates a new attitude to romance tradition and to the female character which is most interesting, and points forward to later developments.

Most critics, however, remain convinced of the work's supposed weaknesses. F.R. Hart remarks of the scene where Archie spies Christina on the moor that it is vitiated by sentimentality:

> With something close to the ambivalence of Barrie with his Sentimental Tommy or Neil Munro with his Gilian the Dreamer, Stevenson the narrator has vicariously eluded the demands of reality. In the first interview (the sixth chapter) he seems unequivocally identified with the innocent victims:"Fate played his game artfully with this poor pair of children. The generations were prepared, the pangs were made ready, before the curtain rose on the dark drama." One easily imagines what old Adam Weir would say of such childish fancies. He would see Archie's mother coming out in Archie's creator. [75]

We should see the episode in the context of the novel as a whole, certainly, and recognise that Archie is inheritor of his mother's emotional nature. However, Hart does not place the brief passage quoted here in its immediate context of the rest of the scene, which suggests that far from being weakly emotional himself, the narrator intends us to see Archie's emotionalism quite objectively. The self-deceptions and illusions arising from both Archie's weaknesses and Christina's are shown as contributing to the tragic situation, but are not incompatible with real feelings on their part, and are not

75 The Scottish Novel, pp. 133-4.

to be sneered at; there is absolutely no reason why we should identify with Adam Weir's view of the situation.

The episode in which Archie meets with Christina on the moor in Chapter Six associates her in Romantic fashion with a range of meanings:

> Those things that still smacked of winter were all rusty about her, and those things that already relished of the spring had put forth the tender and lively colours of the season. Even in the unchanging face of the death-stone, changes were to be remarked; and in the channelled lettering, the moss began to renew itself in jewels of green. (p. 98)

Christina is here glimpsed by Archie. He has been thinking about her all afternoon, and in this setting she appears to him like an image of life (signified by her pink kerchief) in a setting that is suggestive of death. Her very brightness and vulnerability are at the same time a reminder of mortality; her face is 'vivacious and yet pensive' (p. 98), her bare arm is 'strong and round' (p. 98), and yet her arm tapers 'to a slim wrist, and shimmered in the fading light' (p. 98). Thus the vision of Christina concentrates ideas of life and death, weakness and strength, physicality and spirituality. Yet although the narrator recounts this vivid Romantic vision of Christina, the context implicitly suggests that this is Archie's perception of her; and of course the kerchief is Christina's own contribution. The Romantic associations surrounding her are more explicitly attributed to Archie later in the same scene, when Christina sings to him; it is his private associations and his susceptible nature which make of the incident something meaningful.

> By one of the unconscious arts of tenderness the two women were enshrined together in his memory. Tears, in that hour of sensibility, came into his eyes indifferently at the thought of either, and the girl, from being something merely bright and shapely, was caught up into the zone of things serious as life and death and his dead mother (p. 102).

Christina singing is compared to Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper, a comparison which is explicitly made by Archie himself. The Romantic vision of Christina is that of the young man, and the hour of sensibility is Archie's not the narrator's. It is Archie here who projects on to Christina certain meanings which she attracts in this context; it is he who makes of her a sacred object. [76]

Furthermore, Christina is entirely aware of what she is doing. Christina may appear to Archie to resemble the unselfconscious Solitary Reaper, and possess an air of mystery and pathos, but it is clear she has set out deliberately to create a certain impression, and is working quite consciously on Archie's emotions. When she finishes her song, we are told, 'He arose instinctively, she also, for she saw she had gained a point, and scored the impression deeper, and she had wit enough left to flee upon a victory' (p. 104). The moment of Romantic epiphany which Archie experiences at the sight of Christina is thus set in a modifying context; it is not that the moment does not have its own kind of 'truth', indeed, as events bear out, it does; but it is also clearly shown to be created by the emotionalism of a Romantic young man and the collusion of a young woman trained, as the narrator indicates young women are, to act a part that will please her lover.

There is a certain irony in the situation in that it is while Archie is seeing Christina as a Romantic symbol that he also has

76 Paul Binding points out pertinently in his introduction to Weir of Hermiston and other Stories (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 41, that the story is historically contextualized in the Romantic era, and Archie's outlook is suggested by his interest in the French.

his deepest insights:

> Young Hermiston was struck with a sudden chill. He was reminded that he now dealt in serious matters of life and death. This was a grown woman he was approaching, endowed with her mysterious potencies and attractions, the treasury of the continued race, and he was neither better nor worse than the average of his sex and age. (p. 98)

Archie's sudden awareness of Christina's sexuality and his realization of personal responsibility foreshadow the last words of the novel as we have it, when Archie becomes fully aware for the first time that she is an autonomous being, with an existence beyond his own:

> He felt her whole body shaken by the throes of distress, and had pity upon her beyond speech. Pity, and at the same time a bewildered fear of this explosive engine in his arms, whose works he did not understand, and yet had been tampering with. There arose from before him the curtains of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. (p. 137)

The supremely epiphanic moments in which Christina is Romantically enshrined afford Archie - and the reader - a glimpse of the truth that lies beyond Romanticism: that the woman is no mere image, but a living being with a will and emotions of her own. His failure to recognize this in time are in part what lead to the final encounter which so dismays him, and finally, to the tragic circumstances implied as following the unfinished fragment of the novel.

Weir of Hermiston, I suggest, through the presentation of Christina and Archie, offers a richly complex interpretation of romance and Romantic views of woman. Nevertheless, it is true that Christina is not a deeply realized character. Although we gain some access to her consciousness, she is young and inexperienced, and it is in her role as innocent, and in our external perception of her that she gains most tragic 'meaning'. It is interesting to note,

in this context, that in an essay Stevenson was critical of the painter Raeburn's failure to paint young women with the vigour and spirit with which he enlivens his portraits of men:

> His young ladies are not womanly to nearly the same degree as his men are masculine; they are so in a negative sense; in short, they are the typical young ladies of the male novelist.
>
> To say truth, either Raeburn was timid with young and pretty sitters; or he had stupefied himself with sentimentalities; or else (and here is about the truth of it) Raeburn and the rest of us labour under an obstinate blindness in one direction, and know very little more about women after all these centuries than Adam when he first saw Eve. This is all the more likely, because we are by no means so unintelligent in the matter of old women. [77]

This is a very telling passage, and could be turned against Stevenson himself. Although his presentation of Christina is a good deal more interesting and complex than critics often allow it to be, in the final analysis she is less convincing and moving as a character than the older Kirstie, who is an impressive fictional creation. Kirstie is by no means an old woman, but Stevenson, like Raeburn, does seem less hampered by 'bashful sentimentalism' in his presentation of the more mature woman as compared with the young. The older Kirstie is a powerful and vigorous character, with a more full-blooded and 'realistic' existence than her young namesake.

Kirstie is related to Jeanie Deans, to the women of Burns's songs, to the lively women of Galt's and Hogg's fiction. She is drawn from a folk tradition which includes strong, lively women with significant, autonomous lives. Kirstie is rooted in the past, like Scott's peasantry; Stevenson explicitly presents her in such a context.

77 'Some Portraits by Raeburn', in "Virginibus Puerisque", pp. 113-121 (pp. 120-121).

She is set against the tradition of the Elliotts 'And the woman, traditionally passionate and reckless, who crouched on the rug, in the shine of the peat fire, telling these tales, had cherished through life a wild integrity of virtue' (p. 62), Kirstie, like Jeanie Deans, gains from her peasant lineage her vigour and strength, but she is passionate, too. She is also made 'immediate' to us emotionally and psychologically, and may be said to have a 'realistic' kind of existence.

Stevenson conveys a strong sense of Kirstie's humanity; when the narrator tells us she is 'deep-breasted, robust-loined', (p. 57), we gain a sense of her character and appearance. 'Deep-breasted' suggests simultaneously Kirstie's physical strength, her sexuality, and the depth of her nature, 'breast' having connotations of 'heart' and emotions. We also gain access to Kirstie's consciousness, and are made to identify with her in her suffering:

> Kirstie had many causes of distress. More and more as we grow old - and yet more and more as we grow old and are women, frozen by the fear of age - we come to rely on the voice as the single outlet of the soul. Only thus, in the curtailment of our means, can we relieve the straitened cry of the passion within us; only thus, in the bitter and sensitive shyness of advancing years, can we maintain relations with those vivacious figures of the young that still show before us and tend daily to become no more than the moving wallpaper of life. Talk is the last link, the last relation. (p. 123)

The use of 'we' here enforces identification and sympathy with the frustrated Kirstie.

Kirstie speaks a vivid Scots that is reminiscent of the peasant and folk characters of Scott's fiction; but while this gives her an earthy, 'realistic' quality, Kirstie's story of her lost youth is extremely lyrical: '"And do ye no' think that I have mind of the

bonny simmer days, the lang miles o' the bluid-red heather, the cryin' o' the whaups, and the lad and the lassie that was trysted? Do ye no' think that I mind how the hilly sweetness ran about my hairt?"'(p. 128) . Again and again in Scottish fiction the peasant woman is made to have such powerful emotional appeal, associated often like this with her Scottishness.[78] Kirstie is not only a 'living' character; she plays a part in a symbolic fable of national identity. She is Old Scotland, the folk culture which is so rich and vivid, but which is dying. She belongs to the past, which, as in Scott's fiction, is imaginatively and emotionally appealing, but which must give way to the present.

It is partly because of her symbolic function that Kirstie is thwarted on a 'realistic' level. She is barren and thwarted as a person because on one of her symbolic levels she represents a culture which is doomed. Kirstie's submissiveness to Archie, too, is related to her symbolic role. She is the servant of the young present (an echo of Scott's peasant figures), unwilling as the past is, to relinquish her hold and give way to modern times, represented by the young Christina - a more anglicized young lady. Kirstie foreshadows many such Scottish peasant women in fiction, pointing forward to Gunn and Gibbon, figures which are usually, like Kirstie, sympathetically presented; but while women are used symbolically in this way, their potential for fictional development remains stunted in a variety of ways. While the woman is linked with a national identity that is perceived to be dying, she is bound to lead a

78 David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830, (London, 1961), Chapter IX, pp. 273-293, discusses the problem of nostalgia engendered by emigration. See especially pp. 290-293.

foreshortened fictional life. There are few triumphant figures; like Kirstie the Scottish peasant woman instead of fulfilling her potential often bears a heavy symbolic, and all too often elegiac, burden.

Kirstie is not only identified with the past: 'By the lines of a rich and vigorous maternity, she seemed destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of their children' (p. 57), and when she appears before Archie at night, he sees in her a quality of timelessness, a mythic magnificence, for she 'seemed young with the youth of goddesses' (p. 126). Besides her association with the past, Kirstie is made to act as a figure representing the denial of time. She is a Romantic symbol of transcendence, resolving the conflicts of history. In her, and in other such 'mythic' peasant women, Scotland can be made to live forever, achieving, however, only a kind of static splendour which becomes sadly familiar.

VII

The symbolic significance attached to peasant women in Scottish fiction is particularly noticeable;there is also a recurring symbolic use of the Scottish Highlander, often a woman. Before moving to my final, detailed discussion of the work of Neil Gunn, in which so many of these issues are drawn together, it is essential to consider the dominant association between women and the Highlands, linked with ideas of nature and the land, and, very importantly, issues of time.

In Scott's fiction the Highlands were the arena for narrative, but belonged essentially to the past; Waverley left the Highlands

to exist in the present at Tullyveolan. Following on from this there has been a tendency in Scottish fiction to associate the Highlands with the past or with a kind of atemporality. Cairns Craig has indicated that there is a double pattern in modern Scottish fiction, commenting on 'the Lowland drive for harnessing history and the Highland drive to deny it'. [79]

It would be misleading to suggest that it is primarily writers from the Highlands who make these associations; it is rather the case that Lowland writers create or perceive the link between the Highlands and a mythic or timeless existence. This is demonstrated in many works of fiction where the woman is a key figure. In Barrie's story 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan', for instance, Miss Julie is linked with the enduring image of the stone, which is both the subject of local Highland legend and a timeless natural monument; Julie herself exists in a non-developing sense as an ambiguous creation of the narrator's imagination, permanently situated in a wintry glen whose snowy condition images forth its lack of historical development or 'meaning'.

Besides being endowed with this archetypal or 'mythic' meaning, the Highlands in Scottish cultural representation have acquired links with certain metaphorical complexes, as was noted in the chapter on Scott and these resemble the Romantic ideas of 'Woman'. The Highlands were particularly associated with the idea of 'the primitive', as part of a general interest in the eighteenth century, and this idea was popularized through the work of Ossian and Scott.

79 'The Body in the Kitbag: History and the Scottish Novel', p. 22.

'The primitive', like Romantic nature and like the woman, has more than one face. It can be wild and threatening, like the ruthless Highland woman Helen MacGregor in Rob Roy. Ideas of moral instability and violence, irrationality and emotion all cluster around the Scottish Highlands. Yet Waverley is also strongly drawn by the more appealing Flora MacIvor, who represents the Highland powers of 'enchantment'.

These ideas are demonstrated throughout nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction where the Highlands and 'woman' are often symbolically brought together. In Adam Blair, when Adam goes on the fateful visit to Charlotte which results in his 'fall', she is, significantly, located in a Highland setting, which is an emotional and moral correlative for Adam's disturbed state; he is dangerously enchanted by Charlotte. Julie Logan in Barrie's story also represents to the protagonist the threatening although enchanting qualities of the Scottish Highlands. In MacDougall Hay's Gillespie the central structure of the novel is built around the contrast between the prosaic Lowlander and his Highland wife. He sees her life as full of magic and danger:

> The whole thing was so different from the sordid life of an Ayrshire fishing-port, which had no leisure and little inspiration for romance in its pale flat lands, that his life became clothed upon with wonder, and he lived in a world with more in it of magic than of reality. He sat under the elusive deft hands of a seer, who wove upon him a garment rich with pearls and shone upon with a haunting light, here and there alluring and splendid; but there also stained with the shadows of what was grim, terrible, and foreboding. He could not feel himself sib to this glancing wife. [80]

80 Gillespie (London, 1914), p. 6.

The fear of that which the wife's Highland past represents leads her and her husband to repress that aspect of their son's heritage, and the result is a monstrous imbalance, Gillespie being an example of the Lowland nature at its most extreme. The vexed relationship between Lowland and Highland is a major recurring theme in Scottish fiction; the repressive Lowland aspect is often personified as masculine, as in Gillespie and later in Ian Macpherson's Land of our Fathers, where the Highland lineage is again female, the masculine Lowland and exploitative. In Stevenson's Catriona, Catriona's father is a morally corrupt Highlander, but his daughter is free from such associations. Like Scott with Flora, perhaps, Catriona's creator cannot bring himself to associate his heroine with moral corruption, but Catriona herself may also be representative of a further related set of associations surrounding the Highlands.

The Scottish Highlands are linked with ideas such as sensibility, the emotions, instinct and impressionability. This particular set of associations was most coherently set out in the nineteenth century by Ernest Renan in France and Matthew Arnold in England, both of whom wrote about the Celt without themselves having any deep knowledge of Celtic culture, whose ideas were based on those of previous thinkers, and yet whose vision was very influential. Renan wrote that the Celtic race '"est une race essentiellement féminine"',[81] but as Chapman suggests, Renan's study of the Celts is, perhaps, an extension of his own sense of loss: 'we find that the Celt becomes a conflation of the domesticity and femininity of Renan's

81 Quoted by Malcolm Chapman, The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture (London and Montreal, 1978), p. 85, from Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, 1947), vol II, p. 258. Further references to Chapman are given after quotations in the text.

childhood; of the emotionality that he felt his intellectuality had lost him; of all the supposed characteristics of primitive literature, naïveté, spontaneity and simple unaffected truth; and of the aesthetic emotion, the poetic emotion, the religious emotion, and the moral emotion' (p. 84). Chapman also quotes Matthew Arnold, whose associations between Celt and woman echo Renan's: 'the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncracy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret'. [82]

Celt and woman are thus both associated by nineteenth-century thinkers with clusters of meaning similar to those already looked at in relation to 'the primitive' and the 'peasant'. The Celt, like the woman, is supposedly gifted with greater sensitivity, a power of communion with nature and a delicate religious instinct; but the Celtic character is weak on the side of effective action and rationality, and is associated with domestic and small community affairs but not the wider political sphere. Chapman rightly points out that such associations are likely to be brought about partly by the perception of the limited experience both of Celts and women, rather than because either group has these qualities inherently:

> The political and religious conservatism that is a marked feature of European womanhood is easily explained as a simple consequence of an isolation, within the home, from the mainstream of thought and political activity. The Celtic fringes have been, for geographical rather than ideological reasons, similarly isolated (p. 86).

82 Chapman, p. 106, quoting Matthew Arnold, The Study of Celtic Literature (London, 1891), p. 90. First published 1867. Further references to Chapman are given after quotations in the text.

History and society have contributed to the dominant images of femininity and the Celtic character. Like Renan, Arnold was a nineteenth-century man, and in revolt against Victorian materialism and the ugliness brought by industrialization. The Celt, being like the woman 'other' to the Anglo-Saxon male writer, could be an attractive repository for all the values which were manifestly lacking in this society.

Although Renan and Arnold exalt the Celt's supposedly 'feminine' nature, to categorize the woman and the Celt in this way is nevertheless damaging. Sensibility, emotionalism and non-practicality may be appealing from one point of view, but they are also limited and limiting attributes, which may be in the long run internalized by the individual and become self-perpetuating; they may also be an excuse for continued political marginalization. Once again, I suggest that we are not here in the realms of metaphor, but of myth. [83] Such 'received' cultural views extend into the very real areas of societal structure, attitude and political power; it is worth bearing this in mind when discussing literature which bases itself on the sets of associations just outlined.

The analogy between the Celt and the woman is not merely a useful and illuminating one; the figure of the Highland woman has become a particularly popular one. The correlation between woman and Celt was indeed so powerful in the later nineteenth century that one of the most prominent and influential of the so-called 'Celtic Twilight' writers, a man called William Sharp,

83 In Barthes' sense of the word 'myth'.

chose to write under a female, Highland pseudonym, 'Fiona Macleod'. Sharp was not himself a Highlander, nor, apparently, did he speak Gaelic; rather, he adopted the view of Gaeldom perpetuated by Renan and Arnold, to whom he expressed a debt. Sharp's vision of Gaeldom is really expressive of something more general:

> Why, you may think, do I write these things? It is because I wish to say to you, and to all who may read this book, that in what I have said lies the Secret of the Gael. The beauty of the World, the pathos of Life, the gloom, the fatalism, the spiritual glamour - it is out of these, the inheritance of the Gael, that I have wrought these tales. [84]

The Celt here is an objective correlative for Sharp's own somewhat indeterminate Romantic yearnings; but despite the vagueness of the general concepts, a social mission of a kind does lie behind Sharp's vision of the Gaelic 'mystery'. It is difficult to see how 'pathos' and 'fatalism' can serve any useful purpose, but Sharp conceives of the Celt as standing for a 'cosmopolitan' vision, representing values which would contribute to the good of all humanity. His concept of Fiona Macleod is also based on an idea of 'femininity' which is in accord with his general universalist aims.

Sharp's idea of 'femininity' is very much in line with Romantic definitions of 'the feminine'; central to the work of 'Fiona Macleod' is 'a belief that woman would be the medium of a universal redemption, for in woman are summed up all the powers of continuum, all the beneficence of Nature, in fact all the love respondent to the pathos

84 'Fiona Macleod','Prologue— From Iona', The Sin Eater / The Washer of the Ford, Uniform Edition (London, 1910-1912), II, pp. 3-16 (p. 7). All references to the work of 'Fiona Macleod' are to this collected edition.

of mankind both individually and as a race'.[85] Sharp's adoption of a female persona probably did reflect a genuine wish to promote certain values, and sympathy for women in their suffering, but it was also a shrewd move. Sharp was writing at a time when women's roles were being to some extent reassessed, and changing; and the image of the woman was proving interesting to artists. 'Woman' had some literary currency. The rewards for this perhaps lucky piece of opportunism on Sharp's part were various. The Fiona Macleod myth formed the basis for several publishing enterprises, however short-lived, and was remarkably influential.

Although Sharp shared with feminists the idea that women have been undervalued, he had little interest in the social and economic emancipation of women. Sharp believed that for women to be the catalyst for social and cultural change, they should retain their traditional roles and values, and that the supposedly 'female' qualities of compassion, emotion and sensitivity offer a way forward for men. In this, as in his underlying belief in an essential feminine nature, Sharp was actually something of a reactionary compared to his contemporaries. Women writers such as Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot had already presented a much more complex view of women in their novels, and one only needs to think of Thomas Hardy's awareness of social injustice in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, or George Meredith's biting analysis of Willoughby in The Egoist to see that other more multi-faceted responses to the 'Woman Question' were also being provoked around this time. In comparison with these,

85 Flavia Alaya, William Sharp —"Fiona Macleod" 1855-1905 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), p. 140. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Sharp's ideas about women were limited, and the female characters in his fiction stereotypic.

The images of women produced by 'Fiona Macleod' accord closely with traditional romance figures. The 'good' women are almost always pale, shadowy, mysterious and beautiful; their 'evil' counterparts have supernatural powers. Some stories focus on the image of the threatening woman, a Lilith-type figure who is the subject of, for instance, 'By the Yellow Moonrock', the story of a woman who enchants a man when she appears to him by a rock on the moor. She pretends to be Holy St Bride, a recurring figure in Sharp's fiction, but turns out to be:

> a woman of the underworld who could suck the soul out of a man through his lips, and send it to slavery among the people of ill-will,....and if she had any spite, or any hidden wish that is not for our knowing, she could put the littleness of a fly's bite on the hollow of his throat, and take his life out of his body, and nip it and sting it till it was no longer a life. [86]

The central idea is familiar from art of the period: the vampirous woman, alluring but destructive. However, this is the work of a writer professing to be a woman, and the imagery here thus requires particular scrutiny. The enchanted man's encounter with the serpent woman ends disastrously for him; the results of this encounter being graphically described, in case the reader should miss the full horror of the vampirism. The man is a piper, and he is found by the stone:

86 'By the Yellow Moonrock', in The Dominion of Dreams / Under the Star, Works, vol. III, pp. 12-34 (p. 18). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

> The broken pipes still hung on the jagged spar at the base. Half on the path and half on the heather was the body of Rory MacAlpine. He was all but naked to the waist, and his plaid and jacket were as torn and ragged as Lamont's own, and the bits were scattered far and wide. His lips were blue and swelled. In the hollow of his hairy, twisted throat was a single drop of black blood (p. 34).

The imagery of the broken pipes offers interesting possibility of interpretation but it is not necessary even to speculate on this to realize that the horror of a certain kind of female evoked here, as in Lilith, could not be the work of a 'feminist' writer, or even, perhaps of a woman.

Sharp's images of threatening women are, of course, the reverse side of his idealization of women, which rests on an underlying view of the essential nature of 'the feminine'. His idea of femininity as something 'archetypal' is quintessentially Romantic, and closely related to his aesthetic. Sharp conceives of the symbol as a universal concept: 'Art, which is the symbolic language of the soul, is alone, now, the common mirror with which all may look'.[87] The writing of 'Fiona Macleod', self-appointed Celt and Woman, ostensibly offers succour to all through its 'archetypal' images. In fact, Sharp's images of women, like those of other male artists, are not 'universal', but express a view of women which not only idealizes them, but which has a latent political content. Flavia Alaya remarks:

> It was not until after the turn of the century that literary artists, often in partisan opposition to the "new woman" of the age, began to make full use of the "symbolic" woman as the advance guard of a counterforce. Thus Fiona Macleod has something in common with Molly Bloom of Ulysses and with the peasant women who appear in the luminous background of James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Her image can perhaps lay claim to archetypal value: she might be the end result of a process by which intellectual and denatured woman is de-intellectualized and re-natured, a process undergone by many of D.H. Lawrence's heroines (p. 142).

87 'Fiona Macleod', 'The Book of the Opal', in The Dominion of Dreams, pp. 139-147 (p. 147).

Although 'Fiona Macleod' did not ostensibly take part in political debate, Sharp's images of women are in a tradition essentially opposed to feminism. His female figures symbolize what men desire women to be, or certain values ; they deny a fullness of existence to women, for they are never more than one-dimensional. This is particularly notable since Sharp was pretending to be a woman, and perhaps the most significant aspect of 'Fiona Macleod's writing is its attempt to express a 'feminine', 'Gaelic' consciousness.

To understand why and how Sharp's Fiona Macleod writes in the way 'she' does, we may refer back to the notion of the 'oracular mysteries' of nature, a feature of Romanticism which has been particularly associated with the Scottish Highland landscape. Sharp's style is an attempt to convey 'mystery' and a sense of the sublime, and there is thus much imagery of the natural world, imagery which tends to be vague rather than precise; there is much 'gloom', and frequent references to mist, rain and other elemental but generally numinous effects of the weather. The style of the prose is 'flowing', producing an almost incantatory effect, similar to that achieved by the young Yeats in his poetry, in both imagery and construction. This is not surprising since Yeats was influenced by Fiona Macleod, and they pursued similar ends, aiming to express 'Celtic' mysteries. Another contributory factor in the forging of this style was the idea of 'natural' language. The eighteenth-century idea of the Scottish Highlanders as a 'primitive' and unsophisticated people led to the belief that they spoke a kind of spontaneous, 'natural' language. An early and influential expression of the supposed qualities of this was found in James Macpherson's faked 'translations' from the work of Ossian. Fiona Macleod's

imagery, diction and style owe much to Ossian, and have gone on to promulgate further a particular idea of 'Celtic' language and style.

The writing of Fiona Macleod is also, however, self-consciously 'feminine'. The ideas of mystery, spontaneity and emotionalism associated by the Romantic writer with the Highlands are also associated as we have seen with the idea of 'femininity'. Fiona Macleod's style attempts to present a feminine sensibility. It must be said that the idea of the distinctive quality of 'feminine' writing is not only a male one, for Virginia Woolf around this time made her famous statement about life being 'a luminous halo', criticizing the work of her male contemporaries for its excessive materialism; in her own fiction Woolf's exploration of consciousness through a poetic prose expressive of refined 'sensibility' offers an alternative to the kind of 'male' writing she saw as dominating the literary scene. She herself believed that writing could be distinctly feminine as opposed to masculine:

> But it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty- so simple apparently; in reality, so baffling- that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. [88]

Given her views, and cultural ideas of 'femininity' and 'masculinity', it is not difficult to see how Woolf's style could be considered 'feminine'; although to see Woolf merely as 'sensitive' is unduly limiting, the link between sensibility and femininity, often made by critics with reference to her work, is understandable. Virginia Woolf was in so many ways a pioneering feminist thinker, it is sad

88 'Women and Fiction', reprinted in Granite and Rainbow (1958), pp. 76-84 (p. 81). It first appeared in The Forum, March 1929.

to record that her own ideas and writing have helped perpetuate somewhat stereotypic notions of 'feminine' writing, adopted by male and female writers alike.

Lisa Appignanesi sums up the way in which 'feminine' writing is usually seen:

> Feminine, then, as a term of literary description would suggest an art of which the two distinguishing features are interiorization and the conscious creation of mystery either around or within the work of art. The long historical insistence on the otherness of woman, her core of feminine mystery, makes her the natural focus for an art which finds no fruitful material in what it considers the prose of ordinary life and which seeks to transcend the configurations of a known reality. [89]

However, as Rosalind Miles comments, these ideas rest on continued concepts of 'the feminine', which have been socially formed and perpetuated, rather than being necessarily intrinsically 'true'. [90] Women have no more intrinsic mystery than men, except for men. The idea of 'feminine' mystery and the idea of a 'feminine' style, nevertheless, have been most persistent. Male writers, of course, have also written with sensitivity, and used the stream of consciousness technique, but they are often then seen as 'feminine'. This is probably one reason why Lawrence is often seen as being sympathetic to women, despite his reactionary views. [91] Men themselves have, of course, used these ideas of 'feminine' writing to create the impression of a feminine consciousness: Molly Bloom's monologue in Ulysses is a notable example of this, which has come in

89 Femininity and the Creative Imagination (London, 1973), p. 15.

90 The Fiction of Sex (London, 1974), pp. 33-34.

91 Judy Cooke comments that while a number of criteria may be used to define 'feminist writing', she herself 'would rather put the case for a feminine imagination, and cite Sons and Lovers as being one of its finest expressions', editorial, The Fiction Magazine, 3, 2 (Summer 1984), p. 3.

for some criticism from feminist critics.[92] We should, I suggest, be wary of assessing as 'feminine' a style which has been forged by a man, since the very idea of a specifically 'feminine' consciousness is a debatable one; however, we should certainly be alert to the issues at stake, since the creation of a 'feminine' consciousness is a recurring preoccupation with some modern Scottish writers, most notably, of course, in A Scots Quair.

Although 'Fiona Macleod' is not him/herself a significant writer, what he/she represents is important in cultural terms. The Fiona Macleod myth is the extreme result of a historical process of cultural association which is ultimately unduly limiting for both Scotland and women, and especially, of course, for the Highland woman. While 'Fiona Macleod', like Ossian, may seem self-evidently a fake, the effects of the process of associations remain, in literature as in life. Few writers who deal with the Scottish Highlands completely avoid the kinds of ideas we have looked at. Among the most significant of modern Scottish writers to write about the Highlands is Neil M. Gunn.

VIII

All the issues which have been discussed so far in this chapter seem to me to come together in the writing of Neil M. Gunn, and I would therefore like to conclude this section of the thesis with a consideration of his work. Literary Romanticism in Scotland finds important expression in his novels, which explore many of the themes already looked at: concern with the life on the land, peasant

92 Elaine Unkeless, 'The Conventional Molly Bloom', in Women in Joyce, edited by Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (Brighton, 1982), pp. 150-158.

figures, Highland life, and national identity are all characteristic concerns of Gunn. His use of romance structures, and a mythic conception of character and action are a logical development in Scottish fiction, but while much of his work uses these underlying ideas most effectively, Gunn's use of romance conventions and his Romantic conception of archetypal femininity limit his representation of female characters to a serious degree. Women play a significant role in his fiction, yet so far few critics have offered much commentary on this important aspect of his work.

Gunn certainly deserves wider recognition than he has so far had, (especially from English critics), but while in this context it may seem unduly negative to express discontent with his work, discussion of Gunn's work so far appears to have been singularly uncritical. This is probably because Scottish fiction receives so little attention, even within Scotland, that to be anything other than enthusiastic seems a betrayal of all that most critics who bother to write about Scottish literature would wish to uphold. Nonetheless, if we are to assess our literary heritage with honesty we should not shirk the task of challenging as well as applauding the works in our fictional canon. Certainly, there are ways in which Gunn's fiction represents considerable progress in the representation of women in Scotland. Gunn rejects the intense Calvinist morality, and takes an apparently sympathetic view of female sexuality; he is strongly critical of male religious repressiveness and hypocrisy, and women are often shown to be victims of a harsh society. Nevertheless, there are aspects of Gunn's work which, for a feminist at least, demand questioning, and which may seem in a more general sense to qualify his importance, although at

his best Gunn is an interesting writer.

There is undoubtedly in Neil Gunn's work a degree of 'realism' which runs counter to the idea of him as a Romantic writer. In almost all his novels the very real hardship of the lives of people in Highland communities is evoked with vivid physicality, and many of his novels record with almost documentary precision the details of that way of life, not evading economic considerations. His early novel The Grey Coast could not be described as escapist romance, evoking as it does the grimness of a poor living; The Silver Darlings is a richer exploration of a historical period, in which the work of the east-coast herring fishers is comprehensively described and brought to life. The Drinking Well contains an internal debate about the relationship between Scottish culture, the economy and nationalism. Gunn's view of the Highlands is certainly not pure romance.

This realism sometimes extends to his presentation of female characters. Women are shown in the context of the struggle to survive in a harsh climate, and from this point of view their lives are not idealized. The hardship suffered by the young woman Catrine in The Silver Darlings and by Elie in Butcher's Broom is forcefully described; while the death of the older woman Kirsty in The Silver Darlings is both horrifying and moving. Gunn is, indeed at first sight a writer sympathetic to women, and female characters often play a substantial role in his fiction. He shows an interest in exploring female experience and renders the consciousness of young women sometimes with some power and delicacy. The first half of

The Silver Darlings offers, I suggest, a very finely rendered exploration of Catrine's consciousness and experience, without an obtrusive emphasis on 'femininity'. In several novels, too, Gunn's interest in male partnerships is balanced by the presentation of female partnerships such as those of Catrine and Kirsty, and Elie and Mairi.

However, while Gunn indisputably records the participation of women in Highland society, there is a strong strain of Romanticism in his work. Often the effects are powerful, as in The Silver Darlings, which convincingly fuses the sense of a strongly-lived reality with a mythic dimension, but the 'mythic' tendency in Gunn's representation of character has a disturbing aspect to it.[93] Gunn's fiction repeatedly presents women, especially, in archetypal terms. Although women are 'sympathetically' presented, idealization as we have seen, has its negative side. Gunn has a Romantic tendency to associate femininity with passivity, the emotions, nature, the land and national identity, all of which are shown as 'good' within the terms of this fiction, but which may be seen as unduly limited and limiting associations if set in a wider context. What is particularly disturbing is the way in which Gunn appears to present a fatalistic view of women's lot, ratifying suffering by stressing and endorsing female passivity.

93 'Mythic' here has various connotations, referring to Gunn's use of specific Celtic 'myths' or legends, and the idea of 'archetypal' actions. However, Barthes' use of the word 'myth' may also be usefully borne in mind when discussing Gunn. For a discussion of the difficulties in defining the term 'myth', see John J. White, Mythology in the Modern Novel: A Study of Prefigurative Techniques (Princeton, New Jersey, 1971), chapter 2, pp. 32-75.

Gunn acknowledged his youthful interest in the work of 'Fiona Macleod' and its influence on him, and this I believe to be very telling.[94] Gunn himself came from Caithness, so his interest in, and knowledge of, Highland communities was not merely academic or Romantic. Nevertheless, his view of the Highlands may still have been coloured by his reading, and his vision of the role and meaning of the woman seems to me to derive in part from previous visions of Highland womanhood, especially as perpetrated through the Fiona Macleod myth. Gunn's work is, of course, much more complex and interesting than Sharp's, but his representation of women in these somewhat conservative terms is perhaps a serious weakness.

The archetypal vision and the emphasis on female passivity are not merely ideological positions, but are deeply interconnected with the literary medium, and in this respect Gunn's work invites criticism not only from feminists but from critics concerned generally with his narrative methods and the extent of their effectiveness. A consideration of the representation of women in Gunn's fiction entails consideration of the ideology underlying an archetypal view of human nature, of the formal difficulties presented by the attempt to convey this view, and of the possible tensions arising from conflict between realistic and mythic urges in the fiction.

Gunn's novels, as Cairns Craig has pointed out, exemplify the urge to deny history:

94 F.R. Hart and J.B. Pick, Neil M. Gunn : A Highland Life (London, 1981), pages 71, 74 and 215. See also p. 290, note 1.

> Again and again Scottish novels conclude with the recognition that the pattern of an individual life is not a unique and particular fact of history, but the re-enactment of some archetypal pattern of myth or ritual... In Gunn's novels the individual escapes the intrusive effects of history by realizing that he is not moulded by its forces but by the primordial underlying patterns of his culture's myths and legends. [95]

Gunn's fiction is often built around a mythic or romance structure. A central male character's progress through life is given 'universal' significance through association with a heroic myth that is at the same time local in identity: Finn in The Silver Darlings is associated by name with the legendary Celtic hero Finn MacCoul. Concentration on heroism means that female characters, as in romance, are usually assigned more secondary roles; rather than being active participants they are often merely symbolic. Certainly, the first part of The Silver Darlings is concerned with Catrine, who is made 'realistically' present to us in the same way that the older Kirstie is in Weir of Hermiston. Interest in her, however, gives way to a focus on Finn, who is the central figure.

Although many of Gunn's heroes are 'mythic' like Finn, they are usually questing protagonists, living active lives containing choices. Even when their lives are shown as patterned in legendary ways, they are usually 'characters' and not only symbols. The vividness with which Gunn realizes the young boy's life has indeed been critically remarked. [96] The mythic significance attached to female characters

95 'The Body in the Kit Bag : History and the Scottish Novel', p. 22.

96 G.J. Watson, 'The Novels of Neil Gunn', in Literature of the North, edited by David Hewitt and Michael Spiller (Aberdeen, 1983), pp. 134-148 (pp. 137-8).

is more limiting. The essential difference between Gunn's conception of male and female roles is suggested in Morning Tide. The hero, Hugh, is poaching salmon:

> He was being born to the earth, to the mother that is behind all mothers, as the sea, the father, is behind all fathers.
>
> But deeper the earth and darker, more mysterious and fertile, secretive and vivid, red under the dark, instinct under reason, eternity under time. There is a movement on the surface of the waters, but there is a pulse at the heart of the earth. [97]

Although the role of women in rural Highland communities has doubtless been limited in some ways in reality by lack of opportunity and a traditional social structure, Gunn's vision enforces the idea that certain kinds of role for women are archetypal, rooted in nature, not only in society or history. Men represent 'movement'. Women are more earth-bound.

The effect this has on his characterization is well illustrated in The Drinking Well. The hero, Iain, chooses to leave his Highland home for a time to live and work in Edinburgh. There he engages in intellectual debate with other men, discussing the nature of national identity, the Highland economy, and other serious matters. Most significantly, there are no women participating in these debates. As the novel was published in 1947, it might be argued that Gunn was merely reflecting the intellectual scene in Edinburgh around this time, although the contribution of women to intellectual life was by no means as lacking as this would suggest. [98] It seems to me, rather, that Gunn deliberately chooses to exclude women at this point,

97 Neil M. Gunn, Morning Tide (Edinburgh, 1931), p. 172.

98 There were a number of important women contributing in various ways in Gunn's lifetime, such as Helen Cruickshank, who organized P.E.N. in Edinburgh and the nationalist, Wendy Wood.

for in his vision male and female are polarized. The male is associated with intellect, reason, activity, while the female is associated with a different set of ideas, such as we have already seen, nature, emotion, instinct, the land. The image of the intellectual city as a male domain is thus entirely in accord with Gunn's symbolic intent.

Actually, Iain does encounter one girl in Edinburgh; however, she does not figure on the intellectual scene. Morna is 'dark and soft and warm' [99]; a refuge for Iain from work, 'the complete escape for him' (p. 218). She appears to represent the temptations of the life of the senses, divorced from real feeling. Her physicality and lack of intellectuality are suggested in a simile that is worryingly typical of Gunn's description of young girls; she has 'something about her like a dark puppy' (p. 169). Morna is an extremely passive figure, and we are allowed no access to her feelings or opinions. Another female figure who represents a distraction from the 'truth' is Evelyn Henderson, the niece of the local landowner. Iain does not feel happy about her either; she appears to him 'like a siren' (p. 437), she has an 'insatiable loveliness' that sucked his strength out of him' (p. 436), she is 'possessive in a vampirish way' (p. 437). Such descriptions are all too familiar; Evelyn is the 'dark lady' of romance, sexual but destructive. Like Morna, Evelyn is never explored as a character, but remains essentially at the level of symbol, mediated through Iain's perceptions of her.

99 Neil M. Gunn, The Drinking Well (London, 1946), p. 212. Further references are given after quotations in the text. All references are to this edition.

Iain finally returns to the girl to whom he has been, underneath it all, loyal all along. His feelings for her are grounded in reality, we are told: 'He did not "love" Mary Cameron. There was no romance about Mary Cameron. She was there like his own blood. He could grip her by the wrist and hold her as he held his own breath. And she wasn't a hindrance. He hadn't to save her. Nor had she to save him' (p. 437). But notwithstanding the supposed 'reality' of Mary Cameron, she is in fact a symbolic figure, the Solveig character of romance, waiting patiently for the wandering hero to come home to her. We experience her only through Iain's memories and perceptions of her (for instance p. 220), and her role in the novel never extends to much beyond the purely functional fact of her existence.

She is, notably, linked very much in Iain's mind with his home. She is Highland Mary, the 'true' spirit of Scotland, the peasant, the folk-heroine, rooted in nature and the local community, to whom the hero must return to realize himself most fully. At the end she leads Iain back to 'Mad Mairag', the old woman with her ancestry in Madge Wildfire and Meg Merrilies, whose 'madness' discloses special insights. Within the symbolic structure of the novel she represents the oracular mysteries of nature and the wisdom that lies at the 'source'; in the self, in nature, in the local Highland community. Even more than Mary, Mairag is not a character, but a symbol.

Gunn's symbolic women, like Mary and Mairag, often represent wisdom or 'Truth', revealing that which makes the male hero's vision complete. Annabel in The Other Landscape is the extreme of a

tendency exemplified by Mary and Mairag, for while they are symbolic, one-dimensional characters, she is actually dead, and exists in the novel only as a persistent memory or ghost. She is the deceased wife of the remarkable composer Menzies, who is struggling with the concept of 'The Wrecker', the destructive aspect of 'the Godhead': 'And what made him bigger was love, because love was the creative element, not the wrecking element, the creative element that made his music. And that's where Annabel came in. For she was part of the creative element that made him whole. Without that part, creation is non-human and a metaphysical delusion'.[100] It is typical of the function of the female character in Gunn's fiction that she should represent 'the creative element' in man rather than being an autonomous being. The girl Catherine is linked with Annabel in The Other Landscape, and has a similar kind of meaning when she sings to the narrator, moving him profoundly. While Christina's lyrical gift in Weir of Hermiston is presented with a contextualizing irony, here there is not the same degree of distance. Woman represents, in true Romantic fashion, love, wisdom, creativity, truth. It is no accident that Finn in The Silver Darlings has a persistent vision of a girl called Una, with whom he is united at the end. Her name echoes Spenser, and suggests Oneness, Unity, Truth.

Gunn's biographers state:

100 Neil M. Gunn, The Other Landscape (London, 1954), p. 258. Further references are given in the text.

> He was quite clear both emotionally and intellectually that our salvation must come through women - from intuitive perception and not from the analytic intellect. He seemed to feel that a woman may arrive at the necessary perceptions as it were 'naturally', while a man cannot attain to them unless he realises the 'second self'. Perhaps only men have completely separated the two selves one from another - and the more women become like men the more they will succeed in arriving in the desert. Of course his refusal to accept a 'new' role for women was one of Margaret's quarrels with him. [101]

Despite the ostensible value attached by Gunn to 'the feminine', however, his Romantic view of women, as the politically aware Margaret MacEwan recognized [102], is ultimately limiting in both social and literary terms; and this is particularly apparent in Butcher's Broom.

Butcher's Broom is one of Gunn's most powerful and ambitious novels, but it seems to me to be seriously weakened by the view of women which it presents, a view which is absolutely central to the work. Ostensibly a historical novel, it is about the destruction of a way of life that represents certain values. The novel enacts a central symbolic conflict; Butcher's Broom focuses on the moment in time when the Gaelic world was first deeply threatened and nearly destroyed, but it is more generally about the conflict between the 'destructive' and the 'creative' elements in life. Like Fiona Macleod, Gunn sees Gaelic culture as a symbol of wholeness. It is represented in this novel by two women, Dark Mairi of the Shore, and the young woman Elie.

Both are peasant women; and although not an integrated part of

101 Hart and Pick, Neil M. Gunn : A Highland Life, p. 210

102 See Hart and Pick, p. 182.

the community, Mairi, like some of Scott's wandering women, represents wisdom: 'She was rather like a little woman from the hills, from any of the small inland glens, and her kind was not uncommon even in townships near the sea. Only Mairi seemed to have in her an older knowledge than was common to the rest of her ancient kind in these places'. [103] Mairi's wisdom is associated with her closeness to nature, representing the Romantic idea that nature is allied to truth. She is constantly described in terms of the natural world, as a 'stone', or 'a piece of a mountain'. Her connectedness with the earth extends to an idea of 'connectedness' more generally. She symbolizes the Romantic idea of the organic relations between all things in nature, and especially the idea of the woman as uniting opposites, illustrated for instance in George MacDonald's fantasies. However, the symbolic meaning generated by fantasy figures, and effective in a fantasy context, is awkward to express in a more 'realistic' context. Gunn attempts to convey the central idea of organic unity: 'Indeed for the moment there was some inscrutable connection between the basket and her face, between her body and the hillside, and when she dipped down out of sight, eyes that had just caught a glimpse of her might well have doubted their vision' (pp. 18-19). The idea of the link between an old woman's basket and her face is at best faintly absurd, and the adjective 'inscrutable' does no more than mask that absurdity. This suggests some of the difficulties Gunn has in successfully presenting Mairi in all her 'meaningfulness'.

103 Neil M. Gunn, Butcher's Broom (Edinburgh, 1934), p. 11. All references are to this edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Mairi is described as being like 'a standing stone' (p. 26), and this obviously suggests her quality of endurance. The connection between the woman and the stone in 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' and Weir of Hermiston also suggested a concern with time; the woman, linked with the stone, is linked with a mythic concept of time, with ultimate transcendence. However, a stone is an inanimate object, and Mairi is described as being, like aspects of the natural world, 'unthinking'. She has a 'blind' quality, we are told; 'This "blindness" in her expression had often the air of unintelligence, and when she smiled it could be seen as a sort of weakness running thinly all over her face. To move her out of her unthinking self seemed to expose her, to show that apart from what she was unthinkingly she was very little' (p. 9). Gunn does not, then, shirk the association between woman and the dullness of inanimate nature, he makes it part of his point. However, there are problems here, for not only is the constant link between the woman and pure instinct or non-intellectuality eventually somewhat disturbing as a central idea, it makes it difficult to present Mairi as a 'character' at all. Mairi's lack of 'being' beyond instinct, makes it difficult to render her and to perceive her as a 'character'; we can never have access to Mairi's consciousness because in a sense she has none.

Gunn has devices for conveying Mairi's meaning, however. Mairi is expressed to the reader in terms almost entirely of absence and lack and negativity. This is exemplified on the first page: 'the vacant glitter remained in her eyes and they held their stare until the valley began to pour slowly into them its dark comfort' (p. 7). The passive construction here suggests Mairi's symbolic

significance. This use of passive constructions is repeated again and again in connection with Mairi:

> Her little acts were performed with the mindlessness of an immemorial rite. As she smoored the peat in the ashes, her chant of blessing was abstracted into an unhuman monotony. And when the words were finished and her mouth closed, the chant rose up through her head with the released strong-smelling smoke, then slowly died down through her nostrils into the silence and the dark (p. 118).

Mairi appears to be merely a passive object or vehicle of experience; the impersonal effect of the constructions suggests the way in which things happen to her, while prefixes and suffixes also suggest absence or lack: 'mindless, 'unhuman'. Key words and motifs stressing absence recur: 'mindless', 'dark', 'blind', 'thin' 'monotonous', 'vacant' and 'shallow' are all reiterated in connection with Mairi. At one point we are told, 'The burden of the silence pressed down on Mairi who was so used to a state of mindlessness that she fell into a drowsy coma' (p. 132). This seems to me to highlight a real problem: if Mairi is merely 'mindless', she may too readily seem absurd or stupid. Gunn also describes her as a 'simple artless tidy stone of a woman, who had no emotions at all' (p. 88); it is difficult to accept that any human being has no emotions.

Gunn is, of course, attempting to express certain ideas through Mairi; she is not a 'character' in the normally expected novelistic sense so much as a symbol, and Gunn's symbolic 'meaning' is summed up from time to time in key phrases that remind the reader of her function. Mairi is 'the black earth mother that bore and nourished them, with love under her crooning mouth' (p. 151). Even this is contradictory, since she has 'no emotions at all'. But while such phrases may serve to remind us of Mairi's symbolic function, there is

always a tension between her symbolic 'meaning', and her role as a 'character' in a novel, where she also exists in a more 'realistic' sense, interacting with other characters. Gunn sometimes has recourse to a Fiona Macleodish kind of diction in an attempt to suggest the essentially inexpressible: 'For a long time she was like one who had turned into her own house and found it empty, and walked in a silence that was a hearkening to presences withdrawn beyond the walls and fading away' (p. 7). Elsewhere Dark Mairi is described as Davie's 'granny' (p. 143), and the homely, 'realistic' word and its connotations runs counter to Mairi's role as a symbol of oracular wisdom.

Elie, like Mairi, is associated with nature in its positive aspect, but she seems at first a more 'realistic' character. She has more ordinary human characteristics, and we gain access to her consciousness and emotions. Nonetheless, Elie does serve a symbolic function. She represents aspects of the same central idea as Mairi, but she complements her. Where Mairi is 'tight and upright as a standing stone' (p. 26), Elie is like a 'brown stream' (p. 26). She is constantly described in terms of movement and fluidity:

> Elie's body was soft as her voice and it approached Mairi with a flowing welcoming warmth deepening in her cheeks to a slight self-consciousness. Her hair was browner than sand and her eyes browner than her hair, a uniform glistening tawny brown, that concentrated and glanced away as her restless body swayed and flowed. A soft kind girl, whose voice hung on her words. (pp. 24-24)

Elie's physical appearance indicates her natural qualities. She is brown like a stream, like the earth, like sand; she is the symbolic movement of life around Mairi's stasis, Mairi being the still point at the centre of Gunn's vision of harmony. Again, there are some

problems to confront in the expression of these symbolic ideas. Where Mairi is so 'mindless' as to fall into a coma, Elie is so soft as to be 'formless': 'Her nature was tender and generous to the point of softness, lavish and impulsive; like her body which seemed soft to the point of formlessness' (p. 87). I find something disturbing in the constant emphasis on Elie's formlessness, which is reminiscent of the 'character' Sullenbode in David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus, and appears to be again associated specifically with femininity. The constant reiteration of adjectives like 'flowing' and 'soft' can also become an irritating stylistic device.

Disturbing too, is the way in which Elie is compared to an animal, as was Morna in The Drinking Well and Janet in The Serpent. When she is hurt, she goes away on her own: 'In a hole like an animal's den she drew up her knees. "I'm tired," she whined. And there she lay with herself, whimpering and licking her sores' (p. 101). It is true, admittedly, that Gunn often suggests the animal instincts of young boys, as well; Kenn imagines himself like an animal in its den in Highland River, for instance.[104] But Elie's animality is associated specifically with her femininity. There are frequent references to her breasts, emphasizing her female sexuality (e.g. pages 89,90). Furthermore, Elie, like Mairi a natural creature, does not think; she feels. As with Catherine in The Other Landscape this is illustrated by her singing, 'Her voice was husky, and, singing, had a deep artless note that folk found extremely moving' (p. 87).

104 Neil M. Gunn, Highland River, p. 108.

Through her singing, Elie also acquires an impersonality: 'she was not Elie nor any known person. She was nameless, and what was happening to her was no more than what might happen to her hair from the wind, or to her eyes from falling stars, or to her ears from distant music' (p. 292). Clearly, through Elie Gunn means to suggest here the deeply profound impersonality at the heart of art. However, the stress on Elie's lack of identity leads in places to a very disturbing implication: that female passivity and loss of self are not only universal but admirable. Elie's simplicity and sense of her own unimportance raise serious questions particularly in the scene where Rob attempts to rape her. Elie asks him to let her go; she shows no resentment:

> For she had no conscious moral sense of the kind that gives rise to anger or righteousness. She knew that to let a man have his way with her was wrong, but the wrongness was vague as misery. Far keener than any such knowledge was the instinct that kept her from being devoured by beasts. Once she threw her body open, it would be devoured under her passive mind, and the cord that bound her to her son would be broken, and she would sink and the ends of the world fall in upon her (pp. 200-201).

This emphasis on the woman's lack of moral capacity, and her essential passivity, are troubling. This passivity might be seen and accepted as the response of a particular character in a particular situation, but we are told that Elie's acceptance of the situation indicates her <u>wisdom</u>:

> Thus detached, her vision of herself was curiously profound. It was so profound that at extreme moments her own unimportance almost made it disinterested. That was why she could look at Rob and in her eyes show him the dumb revelation of understanding and misery that in all ages has made man beat his forehead and cry on God - or blaspheme (p. 201).

Elie's passivity is thus presented as universally typical of the woman, and is even shown to be admirable. Rob tells Elie she looks like

'The mother of sorrows herself' (p. 281). This idealized vision of timeless female suffering raises all kinds of ideological questions.

Certainly, the suffering of the two women, like that of Stevenson's Kirstie Elliott, is caused partly by their symbolic function in the novel. They uphold certain values, and have representative status as Gaels and Scots. Early on, the land itself is described in terms of a female body (p. 12). Elie and Mairi are identified with the landscape, and the landscape with the woman. The suffering of Mairi and Elie is the suffering of a community, and a land. Their fate is proscribed by their role in a historical drama; Mairi's death is inevitable because the novel illustrates the death of what she symbolizes. Elie's survival despite her extreme suffering indicates a muted hope for the future of Gaeldom and Scotland. As in Weir of Hermiston the roles of the women dictate the possibilities and experiences available to them on a 'realistic' level. However, Gunn does not only portray their suffering, he almost celebrates it. Through the simplicity and their acceptance of suffering, we are told, these two women gain insights into reality, they have glimpses of 'the ultimates' (p. 284). Their sense of their own unimportance is associated with their being peasants. Like the supposed Noble Savage, they are unselfconscious:

> And perhaps here at last in this profound sense of unimportance, of namelessness, lay the quality that drew Elie and Mairi together. Its natural manifestation was an expression of kindness, of giving, and it could work towards this with the selfless ardour that is seen in birds when they are feeding their young;it desired brightness and pleasant talk and fun, as trees aspire to the sun and the rustle of leaves in a summer wind;all primitive peoples know it, if they are not cursed unduly by their own witch-doctors or the witch-doctors of 'civilised nations'; and the utmost wisdom achieved by man has made a symbol of it in the breaking of bread (pp. 234-5).

However, it is especially in their femininity that their sense of 'unimportance' lies, and their wisdom comes from accepting this:

> in some curious fashion they were like two figures giving judgement amongst men, while leaving the unravelling of the final mystery of human conduct to unearthly powers. Their namelessness, like their hour, had pursued them and caught them up. Man was the child over which their eyes brooded. They could be all things to him and nothing. Life must go on (p. 284).

The use of phrases such as 'in some curious fashion' suggests the vagueness of the general concepts here, but behind the series of quasi-mystical statements lies a troubling idea. Elie herself does not judge; judgement occurs by the fact of the women's existence rather than through any will of their own. Women are made important by their 'namelessness', which also destroys them; it seems they are destined to play an eternally nurturing and caring role, and yet to remain 'nameless'. This kind of fatalism about the woman's role I find very disturbing.

The novel does indeed turn about a central difference between male and female. Although all the people of the community are shown to share in the natural goodness of the peasant, with the truly destructive force coming from outside, within the community itself, the women are different from the men. The man's role is represented in the novel chiefly by Colin. His physical attributes, like those of Elie, suggest his essential being: 'Colin's chest looked broad and full of power. Above that chest his features appeared small, but finely made and hardy. Davie liked him at that moment - his compact strength, his clean assurance. Even his cheerfulness had a hard fighting glint' (p. 67). Colin represents strength, activity, confidence, as opposed to Elie's soft and yielding flesh. The

difference between male and female is further emphasized when we are told of the different roles they play in the community, roles which Gunn seems to present as essential, and to endorse: 'The system worked very well, for the man in his sphere and the woman in hers were each equally governing and indispensable. Thus the difference between a man and a woman was emphasised and each carried clear before the other the characteristics and mystery of the male and female sex' (p. 65). In stressing these essentially different roles, Gunn indicates that the instinct for the male to go to war is a natural one. Although they leave the women alone and unprotected, the men are only answering the call of instinct: 'But they gave the rein to their spirits, for the call to arms came up through their blood from the generations before in a scarlet bubble of gallantry and mirth' (p. 80). This imagery is ambiguous. The bubble of blood suggest not only the blood of the men as it pulses in their veins, but hints at the blood that will be shed in war. Yet it is described as a 'bubble of gallantry and mirth', and would thus seem to be a glorification of warfare. Like the essential passivity of the women, who must accept their men's need to go and fight, this idea of 'essential' male nature seems to me disquieting in its implications. The underlying vision of human nature seems to be fatalistic. It also limits the roles allowed to both men and women in the fiction.

The central image of the novel indicates the different roles and meanings apportioned to male and female. The cottage is dark, we are told, and 'In the centre of this gloom was the fire, and sitting round it, their knees drawn together, their heads stooped, were the

old woman, like fate, the young woman, like love, and the small boy with the swallow of life in his hand' (p. 31). The two women are symbols, but the male is not quite a symbol; instead, he holds symbolic meaning in his hand, and that which he holds are the male prerogatives: life itself, action, experience. This sums up the vision at the heart of the novel, and illustrates the problems it raises. The view of human nature which this novel expresses like others by Gunn, with male and female roles presented as irreconcilably and eternally different, may be questioned from an ideological point of view. Women, being 'essential' by the mere fact of their gender, essentially passive, and within the fiction essentially symbolic, are difficult to express as 'characters'. The novel, in struggling with these problems, lays itself open to criticism on political grounds, but also because it does not always succeed in successfully expressing its ambitious, if problematic vision.

IX

Neil Gunn's fiction is a logical culmination of the Romantic tradition in Scottish fiction, and many of the problematic issues raised by the Romantic representation of women in earlier fictions are raised with particular acuteness in his work.

We have seen that the Romantic tradition has grown up alongside and through a more earthy folk tradition in Scotland. Despite the lingering strength of the folk tradition, which typically represents women as independent and sexual, the power of the Romantic mode has meant that women are often idealized in Scottish fiction, represented as symbolic and sometimes shadowy figures. This is particularly true of works of fantasy; without a more definite referential structure,

the female figures of MacDonald's and Lindsay's fiction are often little more than ciphers. An interest in romance and 'myth' causes writers to endow women even in more 'realistic' contexts with 'significance', but there are limitations on the potential such characters have for development, when they are repeatedly associated with certain clusters of ideas such as nature, the emotions and the imagination, as in 'Fiona Macleod's work, or restricted by their youthful innocence as in Stevenson's Catriona.

In the late Victorian and early modern period, writers overcome some of the limitations characteristically inhibiting the scope of female characters; Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston notably illustrates interesting use of the Scottish folk tradition combined with a more modern awareness of the social effects of sexual role-playing. Neil Gunn, like Stevenson, is also more sympathetic to women and female sexuality than some earlier writers, but in fact his fiction perpetuates a stereotypic view of 'femininity', and one which seriously limits his achievement, sharing as it does some of the worse elements of the writing of 'Fiona Macleod'. The Romanticization not only of the woman but of the peasant and the Highlander as well is a central feature of Gunn's work, as it is of other earlier fictions; the 'myth' of the Scottish Highlander, especially the Highland woman, is very much alive in the twentieth century.

Romance and Romanticism, then, are powerful forces in Scottish fiction, and lie behind many of the images of women which appear throughout the twentieth century. Romance certainly lies behind the shadowy imperious Madame von Einem in John Buchan's Greenmantle for instance (the title of the novel being, significantly enough,

suggested by the name given to Lilias in Scott's Redgauntlet), while coming up to date, a more 'sympathetic' aspect of Romantic femininity is perhaps suggested in the emblematic female figures who dominate Alasdair Gray's novels less than their dust-jackets. The regenerative power of femininity would seem to be embodied in the giant woman on the cover of Lanark.

Certainly, some twentieth-century Scottish writers have shown more ambiguous or ironic awareness of Romantic tradition, as does, for instance, Eric Linklater in Magnus Merriman. Linklater's ironic purpose is, however, sometimes unclear in its focus. The eponymous hero of this novel returns to Orkney, to settle down with his young 'Earth Mother' love, Rose, an uneducated country girl. Magnus takes a very condescending view of her, thinking, 'She had no wit and only the most elementary appreciation of humour, but her voice was young and her shyness engaging'.[105] Rose is certainly not a fully idealized heroine, she resembles in many respects the scolding wife of Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter', another figure who has become a Scottish literary stereotype; but while it is tempting to 'judge' the egocentric Magnus, rather than Rose, we do not escape the focus of his feelings and thoughts, so that our critical responses are often uncertain.

Rose is particularly identified with Magnus's sense of national identity, which stimulates his creativity:

105 Magnus Merriman (London and Toronto, 1934), p. 245. Further references are given after quotations in the text. All references are to this edition.

> That night he could make nothing of Scotland's renascence, and added not a line to The Returning Sun. But he thought of Rose, and the more he thought of her the more she excited him, till at last he wrote, quick-fingered, a set of verses that might very well do for an autograph album' (p. 246)

Clearly a comic intent is never far away. The humour rebounds on Magnus himself, and the novel seems to play about with literary stereotypes of the kind I have examined. Magnus Merriman deals humorously with ideas about national identity; but the precise nature of the irony at work here is confused by more lyrical scenes, where the reader is again forced to identify with Magnus, and with Magnus's perceptions for instance, of Orkney. The landscape is perceived by him in terms of a female body:

> He stopped to rest awhile, and turned and saw beneath him a starlit maiden land, stained with the star-twinkling darkness of the great loch, spreading in dusky whiteness to the white round breasts of Hoy. Twin hills they stood, snow-clad, round as the buxom breasts of a girl, and flatly before them lay the white map of Orkney (p. 352)

How should the reader respond to this Romantic view? Is it ironically intended? The end of the novel leaves us uncertain as to Linklater's intention, when we see Magnus blissfully content, while Rose washes his dirty clothes.

Although a novel such as this more self-consciously than others takes up national stereotypes, the ambiguity of their presentation is unsatisfactory, and we have still not fully escaped many of the images which we have seen to be so limiting. This is a problem also with Robin Jenkins's more recent novel, Fergus Lamont, which, like Magnus Merriman, offers an analysis of Scottish identity through the life of a central male protagonist. Fergus Lamont's long and full life ends with his 'idyll' in the Hebrides with another 'earth mother' figure, Kirstie, whose name, of course, has literary and

cultural resonances for the reader aware of Weir of Hermiston. Like Linklater, Jenkins appears to be self-consciously using Scottish stereotypes, and reworking and commenting on them. However, the novel's use of these stereotypes means it never fully avoids their effects, and our responses are at times limited or confused because we are presented only with the account of the ambiguous first-person narrator, Fergus himself, who says of Kirstie, for instance, 'Kirstie was not what the world calls bright. At school she must have been a dunce. People called her feeble-minded. I called her so myself. All that was true. Yet I found more pleasure in her silences than I ever did in the spoutings of men regarded as brilliant'. [106] Although the novel obviously has an ironic and comic dimension, we are still not fully escaping here from the image of the 'mindless' Highland woman, presented more seriously in the figure of Gunn's Dark Mairi. When the 'anti-kailyard' writers attacked the kailyard by taking its stereotypes and inverting them, they did not fully escape the limitations of the original form; similarly, I suggest that until Scottish writers are able to ignore some of the 'myths' about identity that have gone before, we will perhaps not see more rewarding images emerge.

Having said that, it is true that some writers have used stereotypes and conventions to their own ends and produced startling and original results. The most notable writer to do this in modern Scotland was 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon', whose famous A Scots Quair uses the Scottish literary tradition to great effect, and who is the subject of my next chapter.

106 Robin Jenkins, Fergus Lamont (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 224-5.

CHAPTER 5

A SCOTS QUAIR

I INTRODUCTORY : THE COMPLEXITY OF A SCOTS QUAIR AND A NEGLECTED THEME

II CHRIS AND THE CRITICS

III CHRIS AS A QUEST PROTAGONIST

IV CHRIS AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN : A FEMINIST THEME

V CHRIS AS A ROMANTIC SYMBOL

VI CHRIS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

VII CHRIS AND EWAN : A READING OF GREY GRANITE

VIII CONCLUDING : CHRIS AND HER MANY MEANINGS

I

Some of the roles characteristically assigned to women in the fiction of Walter Scott, and developed and diversified throughout the following century, lie behind the creation of the central female figure, the peasant woman Chris Guthrie, in James Leslie Mitchell's trilogy of novels, A Scots Quair, published by him under the name 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon'. [1] The significant parts played by religion and folk culture in Scottish fiction of the nineteenth centuries, especially in relation to the representation of women, are developed further in this important work by a writer who was himself of 'peasant' background, and who was deeply critical of Scottish Calvinism. A Scots Quair also strikingly illustrates the use of romance forms and Romantic ideas in a Scottish context; Gibbon is in some ways a radical, but one who uses women in a Romantic symbolic way. A notable feature of Gibbon's trilogy, however, is a new and self-conscious interest in the role of women in society, a facet of the work which has until now received little attention.

Most critics, indeed, tend to underestimate the complexity of Gibbon's achievement. By focusing primarily on one aspect of A Scots Quair and ignoring others, they offer readings of the trilogy which are sometimes seriously lop-sided. Although of course it is impossible for any interpretation of a work to be completely comprehensive, the various often contradictory strands in A Scots Quair, its complex fusion of 'realism' and 'romance', and its concern with issues of national identity, make this work

1 I will refer to the author as Gibbon throughout.

a much richer and more problematic one than is usually recognized. A consideration of Gibbon's representation of women may help fill a gap in the critical debate, and suggest ways in which the existing criticism is inadequate.

The main point I wish to emphasize in my critique of the Gibbon critical industry is the heavily masculine bias of most of the work to date, which is more surprising than that found in Scott criticism, considering that Gibbon is a twentieth-century writer interested in the role of women. At the most obvious level this bias is apparent in a critical refusal seriously to consider the significance of Gibbon's decision to make his central character in A Scots Quair a woman. Some critics do obliquely suggest reasons for Gibbon's choice of a female protagonist; Ian Campbell, for instance, has mentioned the 'possibilities of delicacy' afforded to Gibbon by choosing to write about a woman, in contrast to the more 'masculine' subjects of the anti-kailyard writers, with their macho anti-heroes. [2] Cairns Craig has commented that Chris Guthrie's refusal to take her author's escape route of education, in order to get out of her narrow community, does not devalue her character for the reader because she is measured against the values of that community, but, Craig says, 'it helps, of course, that she is not a man'. [3]

However, among the published critics, so far only Douglas F. Young has commented on Mitchell's more important reasons for

2 'Out of the Kailyard and into the World', Weekend Scotsman, 14 August 1982.

3 'Fearful Selves: Character, Community and the Scottish Imagination', Cencrastus, 4 (Winter 1980-1), 29-32 (p. 31).

making his central character a woman. Young points out that besides the concern with class in Mitchell's work:

> Some attention should be given to another kind of class exploitation which Mitchell saw to be a consequence of the emergence of civilization and which plays a significant part in his fiction, namely the status and treatment of women in modern society. Several people who knew Mitchell have indicated to me that this was one of his main concerns and topics of conversation. Willa Muir, for example, has referred to his obsession with 'the unfairness women had to suffer in a paternalistic society'. [4]

There is much evidence of this in the novels Mitchell executed under his own name. A female character is frequently placed at the centre of his fiction, such as Gay Hunter in the novel of that name, and Thea Mayven in Stained Radiance. Elsewhere women play a significant role, as does Domina Riddoch in The Thirteenth Disciple and Ester April Caldon in Image and Superscription. Each of these novels illustrates a concern with the woman's role in society, and with the way in which women are oppressed or exploited.

This theme is to be found in his short stories as well. It is at the heart of a short story called 'The Lost Prophetess', in which a young English woman dedicates herself to the oppressed women of Egypt. She preaches of a day when women shall be honoured rather than despised, but her vision is one of freedom and justice more generally as well:

4 Beyond the Sunset (Aberdeen, 1973), pp. 16-17.

> She preached no war on men, but rather the flaming creed that was to purge love of cruelty and abomination for those who set their feet on the way, El Darb, the Road of abstinence and sacrifice and selflessness...
>
> El Darb - it haunted her teachings. Somewhere , attainable by a mystic Road, was an amazing, essayable happiness, life free and eager, life in the sunlight beyond the prisons of fear and cruelty... The Buddhist Eightfold path, the Aryan Way, and yet also a Road to be built and laid to the City of God.
>
> And it was woman whom she called to the paving of this Road, woman not as the lover or mother of men but as that dispossessed half of humanity which has never asserted the individual existence. [5]

This woman, Jane Hatoun, is captured by a local potentate and forced to live a humiliating life at his hands. When the man she loves comes to set her free, however, she refuses to leave the women whom she has set out to lead and to liberate, and she dies a martyr to the cause of women. At the end it is implied the cause is not lost, despite her death:

> But in the women's legends of Cairo Jane Hatoun perished not that night at the hands of the eunuchs. She perished upon the water and the darkness, and some day- surely from that Avalon where Arthur dreams, and sleeps the Danish king - she will come again and preach the faith that is to deliver the women of the world. (p. 72)

Although marred by the lush overwriting common to Gibbon's 'Eastern' tales, this story bears witness to his engagement with feminist ideas. His interest in the role of women is evident, less interestingly elsewhere, too, as in 'Camelia comes to Cairo', [6] which concerns a young woman doctor's successful attempt to prove to her husband that she is as good a doctor as he is. Although a slight piece, it again indicates Gibbon's sympathy for women in

5 James Leslie Mitchell, 'The Lost Prophetess', in The Calends of Cairo (London, 1931), pp. 54-72 (p. 63). Further references are given after quotations in the text. Story originally published as 'The Road', in The Cornhill, vol. LXVII, September 1929, p. 341-52.

6 James Leslie Mitchell, 'Camelia Comes to Cairo', in Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights (London, 1932), pp. 200-224.

their struggles against male prejudice at all levels. In his 'Scottish' stories, Gibbon's interest in the character and role of women is most obvious in 'Smeddum' [7] which presents two generations of strong Scottish women, with the characteristics of the Scottish folk heroine: the mother, tough, 'unfeminine' and enduring, and her spirited daughter, who refuses the conventions of marriage and, with the 'smeddum' of her mother in her, goes off out of the local community to make a life for herself.

A Scots Quair is the work, therefore, of a male author aware of, and sympathetic to, ideas which may be described as feminist. He shows a strong concern in his work with the role of women in society, being the first male Scottish writer explicitly to explore such a theme at length, but so far no critic has discussed in detail the way in which A Scots Quair deals with this major theme, or how this area of interest may interact with, and sometimes cut across, his other concerns. [8]

I propose to consider the ways in which Gibbon directs the reader's attention to the character Chris throughout the trilogy,

7 'Smeddum' in Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Scene : or The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn (London, 1934), pp. 117-127. First published in Scots Magazine, January 1933, pp. 248 - 56.

8 William K. Malcolm's otherwise excellent recent study of Gibbon: A Blasphemer and Reformer: A Study of James Leslie Mitchell/Lewis Grassic Gibbon (Aberdeen, 1984) does not include any discussion of Mitchell's interest in the role of women. Keith Dixon in 'Crise et Ideologies dans l'oeuvre de James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassic Gibbon) 1901-1935' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Grenoble, 1983), pp. 338-354 does, however, offer some perceptive remarks on the interaction of Mitchell's feminist sympathies with his other political interests.

and how, through her, he pursues a feminist theme. Chris is set in the context of other women's experience, and thus the injustice of society in its treatment of women is exposed and explored, and the struggles of women are made a central concern in the trilogy. Chris and other female characters are very 'convincing' and engage our sympathy on an intensely realized 'realistic' level. A non-stereotypic presentation of women makes the achievement of the Quair all the more impressive.

This is not to say, however, that there are not limits on the work's achievement with regard to its representation of women. Although the novel certainly has a 'feminist' dimension, it is important to realize that Gibbon's work may be seen within a Romantic tradition which relies on a view of female nature that is ultimately somewhat conservative, and this area of critical complexity deserves to be examined more closely. Gibbon's Romanticization of Chris, who is a Scottish peasant woman, may be seen in the context of Scottish fiction which often idealizes female characters, especially 'women of the folk', and makes them symbolic. An awareness of all these issues can also help focus attention on the ambiguities of Gibbon's attitudes not only to women, but to Marxism and political commitment generally, and to Scotland. Examination of the role of women focuses attention on Gibbon's use of Chris to symbolize certain ideas and values, and necessitates a more comprehensive consideration of her 'meaning'.

I suggest that in order to achieve a fair assessment of the trilogy, we need to bear in mind all the various strands of her

'meaning'; we cannot ultimately divorce Chris's symbolic function within the trilogy from her role as a realistic character who compels our attention and sympathy in a more 'human' way, as we saw was the case with Kirstie Elliott; nor can we separate either from the total 'meaning' of the book. The different functions assigned to Chris sometimes cut across one another; sometimes we see the 'symbolic' role which Chris plays forcing Gibbon to make her act in certain ways, her role as 'Chris Caledonia' or as bearer of spiritual or philosophical meaning giving shape to the experience of the character on a more realistic level. Any assessment of the Quair must come to terms with the way in which Chris is loaded - perhaps overloaded - with meanings and roles, and consider how these interact with other aspects of the trilogy. This is particularly important for the final part of the trilogy, which has recently been open to a variety of often conflicting interpretations. It has been recently suggested that 'the field of orthodoxy and heresy in Lewis Grassic Gibbon is now marked out; it is Grey Granite'. [9] This chapter will therefore present a new reading of Grey Granite.

II

One 'growth' area in Gibbon studies has been that of Marxist criticism. Critics, usually of the Left, are increasingly showing an interest in Gibbon's political ideas as they are expressed in his fiction. [10] While it is refreshing to see Grey Granite, especially,

9 A.G. McCleery in 'The Year's Work in Scottish Literary and Linguistic Studies 1981 : 1900-1981', Scottish Literary Journal, Supplement 19 (Winter 1983), 32-35 (p. 32).

10 An early political reading is Ian Milner, 'An Estimation of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's A Scots Quair', in Marxist Quarterly 1,4 (October, 1954), 207-18. A more recent article is Roy Johnson, 'Lewis Grassic Gibbon and A Scots Quair', in The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy, edited by John Lucas (Brighton, 1978), pp. 42-58. See also the reading of the Quair in Michael James McGrath, 'James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassic Gibbon): A Study in Politics and Ideas in Relation to his Life and Work', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982.

come up for some well-deserved attention, the work of these critics is often disappointingly doctrinaire. Few of the politically interested critics indicate any awareness of Gibbon's interest in feminism, or acknowledge the possibility of such an interest cutting across his supposed Marxism, and while it is certainly worth stressing the significance of his work in a context other than the Scottish one, Marxist critics are often unwilling to examine the Scottish dimension of the trilogy. Those who wish to admit Gibbon to the fold of 'ideologically correct' writers tend to concentrate on the role of Ewan in Grey Granite, seeing him straightforwardly as the hero leading the way to a golden Communist future. In such readings, Chris is assumed to have been largely discarded by the author as 'outworn' or 'irrelevant', and thus serious tensions in the work are ignored.

This is indeed a reading common to many critics who would not describe themselves as Marxists. Ian Campbell, for instance, comments that at the end of Grey Granite, we endorse Ewan's 'clear-eyed perception of the realities of life', [11] with no qualification as to Ewan's inhumanity. More recently, Douglas Gifford tells us that the Quair may be read as a success, fulfilling Gibbon's 'intentions' if we 'allow that Gibbon moves on to show, in Robert and then in Ewan, two ways beyond Chris'. [12] Curiously, this appears to contradict a remark later in the same critical study, where he comments that 'Through Chris, beyond all consideration of

11 'Chris Caledonia: the Search for an Identity', Scottish Literary Journal 1,2 (December 1974), 45-57 (p. 56).

12 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 101. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Christianity, Diffusionism and communism, we perceive the deepest layer of Gibbon's striated vision' (p. 106).

These readings - and confusions - seem to me to demonstrate a lack of awareness of, or sensitivity to, the multiplicity of Gibbon's concerns in A Scots Quair, especially of the feminist theme which Gibbon pursues through the character and experience of Chris. More difficult to pin down than this obvious gap in critics' awareness is an uneasy and unquestioning male prejudice underlying many of the established interpretations of Gibbon's work. Almost all the published readings of the trilogy show an unjustifiable tendency to endorse male characters and denigrate female characters, despite the fact that all are, of course, the creations of a single male author who is often, I believe, directing our sympathy towards the women in his novels. Attitudes to male and female characters determine the overall conception of the 'meaning' of the trilogy, and the critical assumptions about the roles of Chris and Ewan should therefore be questioned and the work as a whole reassessed.

It is not all that difficult to find weak spots in the current arguments. Despite their implicit claims to authority and inclusiveness, many of the critics show signs of confusion. Douglas Gifford insists almost obsessively that Ewan is a 'superman' in Grey Granite, but comments that 'Gibbon is far less successful evoking the feelings of this superboy than he has been with human Chris, which is odd considering that Ewan is presumably close to Gibbon's own boyhood'.[13] The use of words like 'odd' - Chris also becomes in

13 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 110. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

his analysis 'oddly passive' (p. 100) - betrays the critic's uneasiness with his own thesis. Other critics acknowledge the tensions in A Scots Quair. Jenny Wolmark admits that Chris retains the reader's sympathy at the end; however she sees this only as evidence of Gibbon's 'failure' to free himself from liberalism. [14] Such a judgement is clearly political rather than literary, but other less obviously partisan critics also seem almost embarrassed by Chris's power to engage the reader's attention. Thus Gifford suddenly remarks in the course of his discussion, 'One of the problems of dealing critically with Gibbon's presentation of Chris is that we tend to accept whatever she's saying or thinking at any time rather than seeing that they are the limited and temporary perceptions of a character created like all the other characters in the novel' (p. 109). Of course, Chris is a mere character, but the very fact that Gifford needs to insist on this suggests the power of her fictional existence. The crucial question Gifford avoids is, if we are tempted to accept Chris's perceptions as some kind of norm, why is this so? The obvious answer is that the text directs us in this direction. Certainly, there are signs that we are not intended to accept all of Chris's ideas unquestioningly; the trilogy records her learning process. She is a post-Woolfian, post-Lawrentian creation, and does not have a static or fixed persona. Furthermore, we do not need to argue that Chris's 'passive' stance is straightforwardly advocated to see that as a character she is given considerable weighting in the text, and is used to express certain ideas regarded as important by her creator.

14 'Problems of Tone in A Scots Quair', Red Letters 11 (1981), 15-23.

Yet almost all the (male) critics seem determined to play down Chris's 'reliability'. Angus Calder, too, reminds us of her fictionality:

> The end of Sunset Song could not be so moving if Gibbon did not expect his readers to implicate themselves in temporary acceptance of the sentiment. But this does not mean that in Cloud Howe and Grey Granite we are to regard Chris as an oracle rather than a character, to accept her mythology and to attribute it to her creator. [15]

Yet, despite this, Chris's existence appears to be so powerful for Calder, as it is for Gifford, that he argues that she is responsible for the trilogy: 'Young Ewan despises "bunk symbolism". But his mother is made to think symbolically. The titles of the three novels are, as it were, provided by Chris's symbolizing proclivities' (p. 107). This is absurd: if Chris is, as we are reminded, only a character, how can she give the books their titles? It is, of course, Gibbon who is responsible for the titles, but the fact that he uses aspects of symbolism associated with Chris's experience and consciousness suggests the importance of her role and her vision. We should be willing to recognize the extent to which Gibbon wishes us to sympathize with her, and analyze how this is done, while stopping short of believing she is a real person.

Clearly, contrary to Calder's view, much of the symbolic structure of the trilogy exists independently of Chris and her consciousness, and can only be attributed to Gibbon himself. To take only one example; it is certainly of 'symbolic' import that events of great moment in the trilogy occur at New Year; while

15 'A Mania for Self-Reliance: Grassic Gibbon's Scots Quair', in The Uses of Fiction: Essays on the Modern Novel, in Honour of Arnold Kettle, edited by Douglas Jefferson and Graham Martin (Milton Keynes, 1982), pp. 99-113 (p. 107). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Chris arranges her own wedding for New Year, it is difficult to believe she also arranges the deaths of Robert and Ma Cleghorn, or the failure of Ewan and Ellen's relationship, all of which take place at New Year. Calder, however, argues that Chris is responsible for devising the monument at the end of Sunset Song, and the 'sentimental' playing of the bagpipes (p. 107). There is, in fact, no reason to focus on Chris's responsibility or otherwise for the dramatic end to Sunset Song, or to judge her wanting. If bagpipes are an inducement to easy tears then rather than criticizing Chris, Calder should look to the real culprit, a nostalgic Scot writing from his suburban retreat in Welwyn Garden City. However, Calder, like so many others, persistently denigrates Chris rather than the author.

It is noticeable that critics tend to associate Chris with emotion and reject her, while they associate Ewan with intellect, and endorse him. Certainly, within the trilogy Chris and Ewan are associated to some extent with different values and ideas. However, many critics move simplistically from a link within the text between Chris and certain values or ideas- nature, personal commitment, emotion- to the idea that she is created 'out of' Gibbon's emotions, while her son Ewan, being political and scientific, is, it is argued, created 'out of' Gibbon's intellect. Such analyses rest on a crudely psychoanalytical approach to the author which polarizes intellect and emotion. Gifford for instance says of Ewan, 'Gibbon doesn't mean him to come over as priggish and unnaturally cold, but since he is the product of Gibbon's speculative political mind it is inevitable that, as Leader-elect, his relationships with girls and friends must be secondary to his

Messianic purpose, the theme of Grey Granite' [16]; of Chris on the other hand, Gifford remarks, 'His heart, or his deepest feelings, remained with Chris, so that finally we see the strange spectacle of Chris, who is not actually carrying the positive message of the novel, carrying more emotional conviction, even although theoretically she's of the Past, symbol of the phase of the Land that humanity has outworn' (p. 113).

The association of Chris with the emotional aspect of Gibbon's personality and Ewan with his intellect only partly reflects an association within the text itself. It is also, based on a polarization common to modern Christian/ post-christian thinking, and one often applied to notions of gender division. I suggest that critics come to the text with assumptions familiar from cultural discourse, linking femininity with emotionality and masculinity with intellect. There are some associations of this kind within the text, but to extrapolate from this such a theory of literary creation is dangerous, and suggests the need for a greater awareness of gender stereotyping. Gibbon was certainly not conveniently divided like this. Marxist theory promotes a 'scientific' approach to society, but Gibbon's political ideas and attitudes were certainly not 'scientific' or coolly objective. One need only look at his essay 'Glasgow', for instance, to see that his political views were based on an intensely emotional response to human suffering and to his own experience. [17] The

16 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 110. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

17 Scottish Scene, pp. 136-147.

overwrought rhetoric and confusion of ideas to be found in this essay, as in many of his others, give the lie to the idea that Gibbon had a rational, 'speculative political mind'.

It is not difficult to understand why critics persistently associate Chris with Gibbon's emotions. She is obviously presented as a more emotional character than her son, more humane, warmer, more 'sympathetic'. Yet there are modifications to the idea that Chris and Ewan may be polarized in such terms, within the text itself. Ewan's conversion to 'the keelies' in Grey Granite is presented as a vividly emotional experience.[18] We also see Ewan experiencing emotional convulsions after his experiences in jail; and in the art gallery he has an intensely emotional vision of all the slaves of the world, and Spartacus their leader. Chris notes a change in him: 'Once so cool and cold, boy-clear, boy-clever, a queer lad you'd thought would never be touched by any wing of the fancies of men, grey granite down to the core- and now?' (p. 97).

Chris is presented to us throughout the trilogy from the 'inside', so that we experience her turbulent emotional life; we also see her choose to be the Chris of the Land - and of the emotions - rather than the Chris of books and learning. This is, however, a conscious choice, and Chris is, in fact, more 'intellectual' than her first husband Ewan, as is shown when they visit Edzell Castle together, and she is more deep-thinking than most others

18 Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Grey Granite (London, 1934), pp. 156-7. All references are to this edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

in any of the communities she inhabits, despite her lack of sustained formal education. Most important, controverting the idea of Chris as a merely 'emotional' character, are the philosophical insights into reality which Chris has throughout the Quair. She has a Heraclitean vision of change underlying all life. She rejects idealism as self-deceiving, seeing both Robert and young Ewan as misguided idealists. She herself is detached from all creeds, religious and political, and is ultimately detached from human emotion as well. At the end Chris has become as hard as - harder than - Ewan. In Grey Granite, Ake Ogilvie notices her detachment: 'He'd thought that glimmer in her eyes a fire that he himself could blow to a flame; and instead 'twas no more than the shine of a stone'. (p. 268) In the same novel we see her detachment when she kisses Archie Clearmont goodbye (p. 282), and when she asks Ewan what has happened to Ellen (pp. 283-4). We see it in her vision of humanity : 'Dinner and the feeding of all the faces, funny to think a face was mainly for that' (p. 36). This is an uncomfortable vision to countenance; it is almost as nihilistic as that of Gershom in Image and Superscription, and might even be compared to David Lindsay's gloomy view in A Voyage to Arcturus. Although it is only in the last novel of the trilogy that we see Chris so completely alienated, her perceptions of the skull beneath the skin recur throughout. This means that we are never allowed to see her completely as a reassuring figure. Chris's philosophical insights bely the idea that she is a purely 'emotional' character, who is constructed mainly 'out of' her creator's emotions.

Perhaps the main reason why, despite her pessimistic philosophy, Chris is continually identified by critics with Gibbon's emotions,

is that she continues to engage the reader's sympathy right to the end. Some critics would dispute this, or, agreeing, would remark that this is not what Gibbon really intended; Chris has merely, as Gifford says, 'an elegiac weight, a nostalgic power'.[19] I will argue that Chris's sympathetic role is not merely attributable to an accidental nostalgia, because through her Gibbon quite deliberately pursues a political theme which was both intellectually and emotionally important to him; a concern with the role of women in society.

Furthermore, while Chris does, I believe, continue to move and interest the reader, this is not by virtue of some indefinable force of emotion, but is achieved through literary techniques. Although Chris has an astonishingly vivid and convincing 'life', she is, after all, only a fictional construct, and one with diverse functions. The complexity of the narrative and the role of the characters, especially Chris, should not be underestimated. Chris, particularly, is both a 'character' and a 'symbol'. Gibbon himself draws attention to the fictionality of his own creations within the text. Chris, in a passage in Grey Granite which matches Ewan's 'bunk symbolism' passage, broods on her frustrated life, thinking:

> That the reality for all folk's days, however they clad its grim shape in words, in symbols of cloud and rock, mountain that endured, or shifting sands or changing tint - like those colours that were fading swift far in the east, one by one darkening and robing themselves in their grave-clouts grey, happing their heads and going to the dark (p. 230).

19 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 114.

We, the readers, recognize in this passage those aspects of landscape and weather that have been used symbolically throughout the trilogy, introduced partly independently of Chris, but also operating within her consciousness and gathering additional meaning there. Chris's musings indicate on one level her final sense of disillusionment, but this passage is also a self-conscious reference by Chris's creator, through her, to his work's symbolic structure. The passage draws attention to the fictionality of Chris herself and the fiction we have been reading. Like Ewan's 'bunk symbolism' passage, this undermines 'Gibbon', also a fiction created by James Leslie Mitchell.

It is true that Gibbon's realization of Chris both emotionally and psychologically is deeply convincing, and it is important to recognize this aspect of Gibbon's work, one which some critics feel has been neglected and inadequately considered. [20] However, Chris has an extraordinarily complex existence, and in order to do the work justice I believe we must confront her 'symbolic' as well as her 'realistic' role in the trilogy. Like other outstanding female characters in Scottish fiction she has a multiple function. Clearly Chris does have a significant symbolic role in A Scots Quair, which is constructed in such a way as to suggest parallels between Chris's progress through life, and the development of Scotland in the early twentieth century. Chris has been all too readily seen as 'Chris Caledonia', [21] but while she does surely exist

20 Isobel Murray and Bob Tait express strong reservations about the 'symbolic' approach to Chris in their chapter on A Scots Quair in Ten Modern Scottish Novels (Aberdeen, 1984), pp. 10-31.

21 This view of Chris's role is expressed in, for instance, David Macaree, 'Myth and Allegory in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's A Scots Quair', Studies in Scottish Literature II, 1 (July 1964), 45-55; and Ian Campbell, 'Chris Caledonia: The Search for an Identity'.

as a symbolic figure of this kind, critics have often failed to recognize the complexity of the relationship between her symbolic and her realistic roles, or the diversity of her symbolic functions, and have failed to appreciate the ambivalence of Mitchell's ideas and feelings about national identity.

There has been considerable interest recently in the historical and social aspects of the symbolism in A Scots Quair. Critics interested in this facet of the trilogy must inevitably confront Chris's role in the narrative. Symbolically she is usually seen as representing, at the end, 'an old outworn Scotland', [22] dying out, or as the 'phase of the Land that humanity has outworn'. [23] Such readings are understandable but, I feel, inadequately allow for our continued response to Chris on a more 'realistic' level. Rather than analyzing the very complex and delicately balanced relationship between her different modes of literary existence, Angus Calder, for instance, has argued that Chris's self-reliance is emblematic of her place in 'a tradition of peasant self-reliance', [24] and her demise may therefore be seen as 'figuring the exhaustion of that tradition in the Scotland which Gibbon surveyed in the early thirties' (p. 103). This reading seems on the surface reasonable enough, but Calder goes on more problematically to discuss one particular incident in Grey Granite. He suggests that Chris is

22 Ian Carter, 'Kailyard: The Literature of Decline in Nineteenth Century Scotland', Scottish Journal of Sociology, I, 1 (November, 1976), 1-13 (p. 11).

23 Gifford, Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 113.

24 Calder 'A Mania for Self-Reliance', p. 103. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

seeking to return to the past in marrying Ake Ogilvie, the joiner from Segget: 'In his company she slides back to the values of her childhood, those of dour, uncommunicative Mearns folk who think it daft to say goodnight to their wives' (p. 110). Here Calder is trying to force his symbolic reading on to material which on a realistic level simply cannot bear this kind of weight.

Although Chris is attracted by Ake's air of independence, which reminds her of her youth, and which is arguably presented as peculiarly Scottish, she is certainly not sympathetic to many of his other social or personal attributes. Chris is particularly critical of Ake's attitude when he clumps into the kitchen and treats her in the traditional male way in Grey Granite (p. 102, p. 183). She never wanted to marry Ake, as is made abundantly clear in the text. She wanted him as her business partner, and only economic, social and family pressures (her fears for Ewan) force her unwillingly into marriage. Thus Chris is not trying to revert to her former social grouping or way of life, and Ake leaves her because she is sexually and emotionally indifferent to him. While it is fair to see Chris as to some extent symbolic of large social and historical movements, we must, therefore, be careful of forcing specific readings on a text which is multi-levelled.

Moreover, while the 'realistic' and 'national-symbolic' meanings must be borne in mind, we should not neglect a third kind of meaning attached to Chris in A Scots Quair. Although Chris represents the development of modern Scottish history and society, she also has a much more general kind of symbolic function. She is, for instance, associated with nature, with 'primitive' values, and with the

transcendence of time, all of which as we have seen are ideas important in a Romantic vision, which is often presented in relation to women in Scottish fiction. Such associations can be reactionary, and it seems to me essential to consider the implicit conservatism of Gibbon's representation of women through Chris, despite his radical ideas. Given the range of 'meanings' attached to Chris, and the various levels on which she exists, Gibbon's work avoids reduction to any simple formula or ideological position.and such complexity deserves closer analysis.

III

A useful way of approaching A Scots Quair, in order to come to terms with its various levels of meaning, is to consider it first of all as a romance, and to look particularly at Chris's role within the romance structure.

A Scots Quair may be seen as a romance, constructed, like earlier Scottish fictions and many of Mitchell's 'English' novels, around the quest-myth. Such a form has been defined by Northrop Frye:

> Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality. Translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste-land. [25]

Stated more simply I see the Quair as about the search for fulfilment and integration, expressed on two main levels. On one level it offers us Chris's personal quest, 'realistically' presented; on another it illustrates a quest for a more general pattern of social integration and resolution, a larger version of what Ian Campbell has

25 Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 193.

called Gibbon's 'dream of freedom or rebellion from an unsatisfactory present'. [26] These two kinds of quest are not separate, however, as they are brought together in the role of Chris, who has a symbolic status which links them and is persistently important to the end. In order to understand this we must be aware of Chris's role specifically as a woman.

I would like to look first at Chris's personal quest. A central feature of the quest romance is the idea of the journey, as was seen in The Heart of Midlothian, in George MacDonald's adult fantasies and in David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus among others. Throughout A Scots Quair life is imaged as a journey. In Sunset Song we are told, 'to Chris the weeks began to slip by like posts you glimpse from the fleeing window of a railway train in a day of summer - light and shade and marled wood, light and shade and the whoom of the train, life itself seemed to fly like that up through the Spring'. [27] Throughout the trilogy the main characters are constantly on the move: Chris's life contains much travelling. The Guthrie family move over the hills early on in a journey that acquires a mythic status when a ghostly Greek appears to Chris in the darkness, a reminder of past journeys. There are many smaller excursions along the way, such as Chris's outings with her husbands Ewan and Robert, and in Grey Granite with young Ewan and Ellen, and many of these smaller journeys have their own considerable

26 'James Leslie Mitchell's Spartacus', Scottish Literary Journal 5, 1 (May 1978), 53-60 (p. 54).

27 Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Sunset Song, (London, 1932), p. 199. All references are to this edition. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

significance. In terms of the larger structure of the trilogy, Chris obviously travels in literal and symbolic ways, from Kinraddie and Ewan, to Segget and Robert, and finally to Duncairn, to life with Ewan, then Ake, and finally, alone.

The journey symbolism, by its nature, tends to encourage expectation of a final resting place, perhaps with some kind of reward at the end. Frye points out that 'the reward of the quest usually is or includes a bride'.[28] This alerts us to the ways in which the Quair reworks the romance tradition. Firstly, as in The Heart of Midlothian, the protagonist is not male as in traditional romance, but female. Secondly, the questing woman here, unlike Jeanie Deans, does not achieve a reward. Chris does not reach a conclusion in which a bridegroom brings final happiness. She is married three times, but ends alone. This is not only a reversal of the usual romance ending, but may be usefully seen in the more modern fictional tradition of conventions regarding female characters. Marriage is traditionally an important conclusion of the woman's fictional existence.[29] Chris, however, is denied

28 Anatomy of Criticism, p. 193.

29 This is commented on by Rachel Brownstein:

> The marriage plot most novels depend on is about finding validation of one's uniqueness and importance by being singled out among all other women by a man. The man's love is proof of the girl's value, and payment for it. Her search for perfect love through an incoherent, hostile wilderness of days is the plot that endows the aimless (life) with aim. Her quest is to be recognized in all her significance, to have her worth made real by being approved. When, at the end, this is done, she is transformed: her outward shape reflects her inner self, she is a bride, the very image of a heroine. For a heroine is just that, an image; novel heroines, like novel readers, are often women who want to become heroines.

Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. xv.

such 'fulfilment'. Her journey often seems to her to have an arbitrary quality; in Cloud Howe she thinks, 'it made little difference one way or the other where you slept or ate or had made your bed'. [30] This sense deepens as she experiences increasing hardship and emotional disappointment.

Sunset Song apparently encourages us to have certain expectations of traditional fulfilment. We see Chris married and emotionally satisfied. The lyrical evocation of Chris's happiness is deeply satisfying to read. However, any expectations that this is conclusive are controverted by the death of Ewan and other events brought by the war, and thereafter there is little comfort for the reader. Critics often complain that Cloud Howe and Grey Granite are less rewarding novels than Sunset Song; but while they usually attribute this to thinness of plot or language, or inadequate characterization, it may also be that they are disappointed by the increasingly 'depressing' quality of the trilogy. By the time we reach Grey Granite, Chris is no longer a charming young girl but a troubled and troubling mature woman, uneasily situated in a restless social milieu. Perhaps readers hope (however unconsciously) for the conventional configurations of romance, and their expectations are thwarted. Rather than delivering a reassuring ending, Gibbon leaves us unsettled by his picture of an alienated woman; but in fact he has prepared us for this early on.

30 Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Cloud Howe (London, 1933), p. 233. All references are to this edition, further references are given after quotations in the text.

Chris's life has, from a choice made early in life, centred on the home; the conventional choice for a young woman. However, the cry of the peesies that sounds throughout the trilogy hints at the futility of belief in security or the idea of a 'resting-place'. In Sunset Song, Chris hears

> the weet-weet of the peewits flying twilit over Kinraddie, wheeling and circling there in the dark, daft creatures that made their nests in this rig and that and would come back next day and find them robbed or smothered away. So for hundreds of years they'd done, the peewits, said Long Rob of the Mill, and hadn't learned the sense of the thing even yet (p. 120).

The peewits' hopes for security, and constant disappointment, echo and foreshadow Chris's own life, which is one marked by change and disruption. She moves from 'home' in Blawearie, to a manse that comes and goes with Robert, and ends up in a boarding-house which effectively symbolizes impermanence and impersonality. In Grey Granite Chris thinks of life as 'that dreich, daft journey that led nowhither-' (p. 71). She reassures herself swiftly 'daft the journey, but the journeying good' (p. 71), but as this novel unfolds, we see Chris more and more troubled, until eventually she sees her life as having been a journey beset by trouble and pain, 'a way strewn with thorns and set with pits' (p. 230).

Some of her disappointment comes from the failure of her personal relationships. While Chris loses two of her husbands to death, her marriages to both Ewan and Robert have in any case already failed or at least suffered severe difficulties, and Ake Ogilvie leaves her at the end. Chris does not find a secure and happy ending in marriage. Again, there are early hints that such a secure ending is impossible or unlikely. Long Rob, with whom Chris has a brief and poignant relationship - significantly destroyed by the war -

tells Chris at her wedding in Sunset Song that he will always be there if she needs a friend. At the time she thinks, 'a daft-like speak for Rob, kind maybe he meant it, but she'd have Ewan, who else could she want?' (p. 186). As events bear out, marriage is not necessarily enduring or sufficient, and she does need Rob, when Ewan fails her.

Certainly, while the failure of Chris's three marriages conveys a pessimistic outlook, there are hints that marriage in itself is not enough for Chris, she will always need other things in her life. Her mother tells her early on in Sunset Song that there are things beyond either books or loving, such as the land itself (p. 45), and Chris maintains an important relationship with the land. We also see her in her relationship with other women. So the trilogy does not merely imply (as it might have done) that Chris's life is a failure because her marriages have failed; it offers a critique of the idea of marriage as the single most important goal and enduring institution for a woman, both socially and in fictional terms. However, clearly Chris is searching for happiness in marriage, and happiness finally eludes her. The various implications of Chris's quest, and the ultimate 'failure' of that quest, may be clarified if we consider more closely Chris's role as protagonist as it is expressed in other ways.

It is surprising how little has been said by critics about Chris's role as a questing modern female 'hero' confronting her identity and destiny. Like Jeanie Deans, Chris has considerable stature as protagonist. It is often remarked that the novel is a kind of Bildungsroman, but it is worth looking in more detail at

recurring motifs which indicate the importance of Chris's personal search for 'selfhood'. One important recurring motif is that of the mirror. Frequent scenes show Chris surveying herself in a mirror in attempts to assess herself and her life, and these scenes mark stages on her quest. The first scene in which Chris thus surveys herself is the one in Sunset Song where she looks at herself 'in the long glass that had once stood in mother's room'(p. 91). The home environment here illustrates her early security, and she is set in the context of female experience that will be of significance throughout. It is the death of her mother that forces Chris into a premature awareness of mortality in Sunset Song, an awareness that haunts her all her life: 'It was not mother only that died with the twins, something died in your heart and went down with her to lie in Kinraddie kirkyard - the child in your heart died then, the bairn that believed the hills were made for its play' (p. 83).

Chris sets out hopefully on the journey of life, but is increasingly disillusioned, and we see these scenes with the mirrors reflect both her changing circumstances, and her growing unease about herself and her identity. From the time she first sees herself content and secure in her mother's mirror, Chris's reflections are increasingly troubled. In Sunset Song she is still associated with the natural world, when she looks at herself in the surface of the loch (p. 129), but the natural imagery is more disturbing in Cloud Howe when she looks at herself 'remote in the broken ice' of a frozen tarn (p. 194); this may suggest her sense of the fragmentation of her life, and relate also to the ice imagery which surrounds her society in this novel. Notably, too, she is

no longer alone at this point, for Robert is imaged there as well. In Grey Granite, Chris considers herself in a very different kind of mirror, a public mirror, placed 'to show small loons the downward perils' (p. 16). There is an element of threat here in the reference to danger, and the idea of descent suggests Chris is metaphorically on her downward path. This mirror also emphasizes Chris's loss of private life, and her new rootlessness. It is significant, too, that in Grey Granite we are more conscious than in the previous novels of Chris being viewed from the outside. She is, in fact, presented in a less intimate way than before; we gain less access to her consciousness, and when we do she is often alienated or tired; the external observation of her by other characters correspondingly gains in weight. The new interface between Chris and the reader suggests the schism in Chris's own sense of self.

Chris has been, from early on, aware of conflict in her identity, perceiving what she thinks of, in Sunset Song, as 'the two Chrisses' (p. 50, and p. 63). However, Chris's early sense of delight in her appearance, in her sexuality and her hopes for the future, is gone in Grey Granite. In this last novel, she sees herself 'dim in mist' (p. 97), the imagery suggesting a new lack of clarity in her vision, and in her identity. Later in this novel, we see her seized by despair at night; she 'stood in her own room, with the sickly flare of the gaslight behind her and looked at herself in the mirror, hands clenched, forgetting herself in a sudden wild woe that wouldn't stop' (p. 153). That woe, associated with her memories of past lost love, is related more generally to a sense of

transience, the idea that 'nothing endured' (p. 153), a perception Chris has more and more often when she confronts her mirror self. At this stage in her life, too, Chris imagines herself like 'a tethered beast' (p. 154), and images of being trapped, and of sacrifice also recur. Chris, inspecting herself in the Duncairn mirror, sees herself looking smart in new clothes, but she is aware of the reality behind the superficial appearance: 'behind this newness and those cool eyes in the mirror, the fugitive Chris was imprisoned at last' (p. 165).

This mirror imagery throughout establishes Chris as a modern character confronting life with the self-consciousness of her age.[31] The development of the motif, like that of the journey, however, indicates that Chris's quest for fulfilment does not achieve a satisfactory conclusion, and her search for 'identity' leads not to a sense of harmony, but to a final bleak despair and cold withdrawal.

Another set of motifs that establishes Chris as a questing protagonist, and which demarcates roughly the same pattern, is linked

31 Some critics seem unable to accept that a young woman could sustain complex self-analysis. Douglas Gifford, for instance, comments of the 'two Chrisses' passage, 'Is Gibbon here speaking for himself and a much deeper personal division than would be probable for Chris at the time of her development in the novel?' Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 84. I suspect that had Chris been a young man - a Stephen Hero or a Paul Morel - Gifford would not have felt compelled to raise such doubts. However, to raise such crude issues of 'realism' is in any case unhelpful. Chris is, from the start, endowed with a relatively sophisticated consciousness, which we must accept, but her role obviously also resonates outward into larger 'meanings', as in the case of the 'two Chrisses'passage, which is linked to her development both on a 'personal' and 'symbolic' level.

to the image of ascent. This has symbolic resonances from literary tradition. Chris persistently climbs mountains and stairs, and this suggests her place in a tradition which includes Moses glimpsing the Promised Land from the Heights of Pisgah, and Dante ascending the mountain of purification to attain Paradise. Yet Chris does not attain her Promised Land, her Paradise.

To begin with, her climb to the Heights affords her temporary peace. On her ascents of the mountain she has moments of vision that seem to be associated with self-knowledge, and the perspective she gains on the world. These moments of vision in Sunset Song are usually linked to the Standing Stones, which, suggesting the past, are related to Chris's confrontation of the problems of time and change. In Cloud Howe, Chris climbs to the Kaimes, again to achieve a more balanced perspective on her experience; but in Grey Granite she climbs stairs that suggest her new man-made environment, and also a new tortuousness in her climbing, for, like Yeats's stairs, they are winding and difficult. Now we see Chris labouring on her climbs; and increasingly the view from the heights is clouded. Sometimes she cannot see because of the mist. She comes to see attaining the heights not in terms of success, but with herself as a victim, 'led in a way like the captives long syne whom men dragged up the heights to Blawearie Loch to streek out and kill by the great grey stones' (p. 165). On her last climb, Chris has returned to a more 'natural' landscape, but now her sense of desolation is complete, and is imaged forth in the landscape itself.

The imagery of the quest was related, I suggested, to the idea of a final resting place, a home and marriage. The motif of the mirror is also related to Chris's role as a woman; we see her progress from security of identity when she sees herself in her mother's mirror, to a later alienation. The image of the mountain is also very interestingly linked to the woman.

There are recurring references to a mountain called Trusta, a hill which actually exists in the region, but whose name offers interesting potentially symbolic significance, and which is imaged as a woman in Cloud Howe:

> Trusta's ten hundred feet cowered west as if bending away from the blow of the wind, the moors a ragged shawl on her shoulders, crouching and seated since the haughs were born, watching the haze in the Howe below, the flicker of the little folk that came and builded and loved and hated and died, and were not, a crying and swarm of midges warmed by the sun to a glow and a dance. And the Trusta Heights drew closer their cloaks, year by year, at the snip of the shears, as coulter and crofter moiled up the haughs (p. 195).

In the light of this, Chris's climbs on the mountain may be seen as representing her search not only for truth, but for her identity and fulfilment specifically as a woman. Although she finds 'truth' at the end of her quest, it is a bleak truth: there is no final fulfilment for the woman. In Grey Granite, there is one brief image of the mountains which suggests hope. Ewan sees 'Trusta peak over High Segget, the round-breasted hills like great naked women, waking and rising, tremendous, Titanic' (p. 218). Yet Ewan is to detach himself from the actual women around him, and Chris is increasingly alienated and alone. Despite this glimpse of the waking women, Grey Granite projects a generally pessimistic vision through the life of Chris. The alienation she suffers in this last novel is related to her position and experience as a woman in

this society; although Chris has a key role in a work which is structured like a romance, she also plays an important function in 'realistic' terms, which must be looked at.

IV

Chris's growing coolness, isolation and detachment are very noticeable as the trilogy unfolds, but critics have usually assumed that Chris is essentially passive, and holds to a position which cannot be viewed by Mitchell or the reader as tenable. However, I believe her 'withdrawal' from society may be viewed on a 'realistic' level as the development of a theme regarding the role of women; what may be called the novel's 'feminist' theme.

In Grey Granite, Chris thinks, 'So the whirlimagig went round and on: Father, now Ewan, the hill little to either, only to her who came in between and carried the little torch one from the other on that dreich, daft journey that led nowhither-' (pp. 70-71). This suggests that Chris sees women as playing only a secondary role in history, acting as intermediaries; but at this stage she is disillusioned by her experience, and this view of history is controverted by our own experience of the novel, which of course has her at its centre. As this passage comes late in the trilogy, she has already been well established as the protagonist, and we have also seen how male-dominated her society is; we can thus judge the actuality of history which includes female experience, and male attitudes and institutions which often denigrate or harm it. Chris thinks of her father, 'who all his years in Cairndhu had never (that she knew) climbed Barmekin, over-busy with chaving and slaving his flesh, body and soul and that dark, fierce heart, into the land

to wring sustenance therefrom' (p. 70). The man is too busy earning a living to get from nature the simple pleasure the woman can enjoy, denied leisure by the need to work; but also, perhaps, symbolically, the man fails to appreciate female values. Climbing the hill is not all fun, however, ascent can be difficult, as is shown in Chris's last ascents of the mountain; the woman's lot is not an easy one.

Through its focus on the woman Chris's search for identity and meaning, the trilogy focuses on the role and experience of women in history and society, and illustrates the difficulties they suffer. It records certain changes which are often ignored in fiction, which have greatly affected women's lives, and indeed the whole structure of society. Women are notably 'limited' by their anatomy, and an important theme pursued throughout the trilogy is the way in which the coming of birth-control affected the lives of the Scottish people. In his essay 'The Land', Gibbon remarks that the coming of birth control effectively altered a whole way of life, setting both men and women free from a punishing cycle of labour (in both senses of the word): 'The ancient, strange whirl-imagig of the generations that enslaved the Scots peasantry for centuries is broken'.[32] The recurrence of the word 'whirlimagig' here, noted in Grey Granite, is striking. While this change is deeply significant for the whole society, Gibbon records its particular importance for women, not only because it spared them from bearing twelve or thirteen children, but because it helped to

32 Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Scene: or the Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn, pp. 292-306 (p. 302). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

bring about a way of life that afforded them more leisure and freedom: 'Better Fray Bentos and a seat in the pictures with your man of a Saturday night than a grilling baking of piled oatcakes and a headache withal' (p. 302). Gibbon's concern for the woman's lot in this respect is apparent in The Thirteenth Disciple. The narrator, Malcom Maudslay, tells the reader:

> "I was the youngest of four brothers and two sisters, though my father and mother had been married a bare nine years. Things were so in Leekan and maybe are so still. It was the natural lot of women to be perpetually bowed in the ungracious discomforts of pregnancy. They seemed to take this lot calmly, but I do not believe that any woman other than a half-wit has ever desired a large family. Child-bearing: it was a drearily exciting inevitability....If only half the epitaphed ideal wives and mothers who predeceased their husbands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had kept diaries of their inmost thoughts - what a history we might then possess of solemn marital lust guised under the protective name of fatherhood! Especially among the clergy".[33]

Many of Gibbon's novels explore the way in which women suffer because of their sexuality.

This theme is evident in A Scots Quair, explored through the experience of Chris. In Sunset Song we see her mother Jean Guthrie worn out by incessant pregnancies, and she commits suicide rather than face the suffering another pregnancy will bring. Chris's friend Marget repeats her father's opinion: 'Chae said that life came out of women through tunnels of pain and if God had planned women for anything else but the bearing of children it was surely the saving of them' (p. 64). At her wedding, Chris is told by Mistress Mutch (herself the mother of a family): '"Don't let Ewan

33 James Leslie Mitchell, The Thirteenth Disciple: Being Portrait and Saga of Malcom Maudslay in his Adventure through the Dark Corridor (London, 1931), pp. 16-17.

saddle you with a birn full of bairns, Chris, it kills you and eats your heart away, forbye the unease and the dirt of it"' (p. 186). We see Chris quickly become pregnant, and feel trapped (p. 201). In Cloud Howe, we know she learns to use birth-control (p. 255). She thus exerts some choice in her life, whereas we see Else trapped by her sexuality when she is raped by Dalziel of the Meiklebogs, and bears his child. In Grey Granite, the changing opportunities for women are a more prominent topic. Ellen Johns openly reads books on birth control and we see her go to obtain a contraceptive device before she sets off for her weekend with Ewan. Ma Cleghorn comments, '"She'll be able to sin as she likes and go free."' (p. 113). Like Kathy in 'Smeddum' the young woman now has a choice that was not available to an older generation.

However, while birth-control brings new freedoms for women, Gibbon's trilogy does not only record improvements in the woman's lot. Indeed, in many ways he presents it as deteriorating. Behind his presentation - and criticism - of each of the societies in A Scots Quair lies a vision of a one-time perfect Golden Age society. This belief in a Golden Age, in which women would have been equal with men, may be seen in the context of a Diffusionist theory of social evolution, as is stressed by Douglas F. Young, but it may be seen more generally as an essentially idealist and indeed Romantic outlook, that lies behind all his political views including his strong sympathy for women. However, Young's description of Gibbon's views usefully sums up a set of ideas that are integral to Mitchell's thinking, and are especially important in A Scots Quair:

> In primitive society, the Diffusionists tell us, women were treated as equals and honoured as childbearers. With the development of civilization and a competitive economy, however, the role of woman as childbearer put her at a distinct disadvantage. Later when war came into being and became of central importance women became what is now termed 'second class citizens'.
>
> Marriage, say the Diffusionists, loses its spiritual value as man becomes more civilized. In primitive society it was a free relationship with no bond or contract other than natural inclination and affection. In a civilized state, however, it always has economic complications which tend to place women at the level of a chattel and make the relationship something of a business one. [34]

Each of the societies in A Scots Quair is fallen from the ideal, and through the life of Chris Guthrie, Gibbon explores the different ways in which the different societies oppress women, so that at the end we may see Chris's withdrawal related in particular to her role as a suffering and alienated woman.

Chris's alienation and scepticism begin, significantly enough, with the death of her mother in Sunset Song (p. 83). Jean kills herself because she is pregnant, her husband having refused to countenance the avoidance of pregnancy. Thus Chris's early loss of innocence is a result of the particular difficulties faced by women in this society, and each later instance of her dwelling on loss, change and doubt may be related back to this point. Her withdrawal begins in a more socially identifiable way with the death of her father. Although she comes to respect and love the memory of her father, at this point she thinks, 'It was fair a speak in Kinraddie, her coolness, she knew that well but she didn't care, she was free at last' (p. 132). John Guthrie's attempts to commit incest have driven her to emotional withdrawal and detachment.

34 Young, p. 17.

John Guthrie's crimes against wife and daughter are clearly set in context, however; he is shown not to be solely responsible, being a product of his society. Gibbon believed that 'civilization' had distorted man's natural (and good) instincts and various aspects of civilization have damaged John Guthrie. In Sunset Song, we see agriculture as one of the most severely distortive influences. Although the novel lyrically expresses the poetry of earth, it shows the agricultural way of life as damaging to the spirit and flesh. It is the hardship of the farming life that has made John Guthrie the man he is: 'For the bitterness had grown and eaten away into the heart of him in his years at Blawearie' (p. 96) (see also pp. 138-9). This way of life has brutalized him, and the people of his community; their degradation and violence is perhaps symbolized in the image of Daft Andy at the beginning of Sunset Song, the half-wit who tries to rape young Maggie Jean; yet who also has the tenderness within him to respond to the singing of 'Bonie Wee Thing'.

In accordance with the Scottish folk tradition which presents the rural life in earthy and intensely realistic terms, Gibbon tries to present the harder side of a life that has been all too often romanticized and idealized, as in kailyard fiction. His awareness of previous fictional representations of Scottish rural and small town life is apparent in the self-conscious reference in Sunset Song, through the Reverend Gibbon appropriately enough, to Kinraddie being between 'a bonnie brier bush and a rotten kailyard in the lee of a house with green shutters' (p. 105). In his representation of sexual mores and sexual identity Gibbon tries to avoid the stereotyping of either mode, and attempts to analyze the complex reasons for the less attractive aspects of the Scottish

'peasantry', their violence and sexual appetite, and to show that there is more to rural farming folk than mere bawdry or coarse behaviour; they can be tender too, as is suggested by the frequent reference to Burns's love songs. However, the agricultural way of life is evidently potentially particularly harmful for women.

It is not only agriculture which has had its bad effects on John Guthrie. An even more specifically Scottish force has affected him: Scottish Calvinism. Gibbon was critical of the way in which religion, another aspect of 'civilization', had corrupted 'the primitive', and he was especially critical of the Scottish native religion and the church.[35] Like previous Scottish writers, he particularly notes its hypocrisy in its attitudes to, and treatment of, women, as we see from Chris's experience. Scottish Calvinism has contributed to John Guthrie's distorted attitude to sex, and his repressiveness. He will not allow a more humane approach to interfere with his religious principles, which mask his suppressed sexual desires: 'mother's fine face grew harder then. One night they heard her cry to John Guthrie Four of a family's fine; there'll be no more. And father thundered at her, that way he had Fine? We'll have what God in His mercy may send to us woman, See you to that' (p. 46). Calvinism makes him repress his sexuality, so that when Chris takes off her skirt to trample blankets, John Guthrie is shocked, and yet Chris thinks, 'it had been as though she saw a caged beast peep from her father's eyes as he saw her stand in the tub' (p. 80). After his wife dies, Guthrie seeks sex from his daughter, showing how warped his attitudes have become under the harsh influence of Calvinism, like those of so many other Scottish

35 See his essay 'Religion', in Scottish Scene, pp. 313-327.

fictional male characters: Davie Deans, Eoghan Strang, Rob the miller in Butcher's Broom.

Society is damaging in its attitudes, too. The local children chant that Chris's mother is a 'daftie' (p. 85), failing to understand the pressures on the woman; yet Aunt Janet's cruel remarks to John Guthrie show a lack of comprehension of his situation also (p. 86). Guthrie, in turn, cannot face his own culpability in the matter of his wife's death : 'Sign of the times he saw Jean Guthrie's killing of herself to shame him and make of his name a by-word in the mouths of his neighbours, sign of a time when women would take their own lives or flaunt their harlotries as they pleased' (p. 96). The damaging attitude of the church is especially apparent in the behaviour of the Reverend Gibbon, minister of the parish of Kinraddie. It is obvious in his sermon in which he uses the Song of Solomon to titillate his congregation; but he is particularly hypocritical in using it to preach to the women of Scotland 'that so they might attain to straight and fine lives in this world and salvation in the next' (p. 74). He himself is not only apparently unfaithful to his recently-wedded wife, it is implied he has raped or seduced a young girl, 'the Gourdon quean', who is seen by Munro: 'Munro saw her face then with a glazed look like the face of a pig below the knife of its killer'. (p. 95).

In Cloud Howe it is partly religion that has distorted Robert, and makes him turn away from Chris; while in Grey Granite the criminal hypocrisy of the church is again highlighted in a series of encounters between the Reverend MacShilluck and his housekeeper 'Pootsy'. The minister uses her sexually, and this is a counter-

point to the theme of the oppression of the 'keelies', and to Chris's story, showing the various ways in which society is at fault, and the links between them. Just as the workers band together and rebel, so too, Pootsy finally rebels, concluding this complex theme.

Another aspect of 'civilization' which, like agriculture and religion, has caused society to develop in ways adverse to the cause of women, is the occurrence of war. The Great War destroys many of the good people and things in Chris's life, contributing to her emotional withdrawal and scepticism in the later novels as well. Most immediately, we see Ewan distorted by his experience of 'civilization' when he is sent off to learn to fight, and of course, he is actually killed in the war. Although Chris finally understands that his brutality and coarseness have been brought about by his experiences, the detachment she has developed in self-defence is evident when she marries Robert and thinks of him in Cloud Howe as a 'stranger', whose bed she shares (p. 31). Ewan's rejection like Robert's, is related to something outside both. Robert has been gassed in the war, and this causes him to suffer the black moods in which he is so hostile to Chris, and finally contributes to his death. When Chris wants to conceive a child by Robert she is, to begin with, put off by the scar on his back, which reminds her of the horrors of war; and she decides not to bring a child into a world so violent and cruel. She does, in fact, conceive, but the child she carries is lost when Chris runs out to warn Robert of the imminent danger because of the spinners' plan to blow up the railway bridge. The General Strike fails, and Chris loses her baby. From this it may be argued that Chris is justified in being wary of political action, and in withdrawing from creeds which not only

exclude her, but which actually harm her.

Chris becomes impatient with men, a reaction against the repeated rejections she has suffered: she thinks, in Cloud Howe, 'you did this and that and you went down in hell to bring the fruit of your body to birth, it was nothing to the child that came from your womb, you gave to men the love of your heart, and they'd wring it dry to the last red drop, kind, dreadful and dear, and deep in their souls, whatever the pretence they played with you, they knew it a play and Life waiting outbye' (p. 27). Later in Cloud Howe Chris says to Cis Brown, 'Oh, we're such fools - women, don't you think that we are now, Cis? To worry so much about men and their ploys, the things that they do and the things that they think!' (p. 231). This may be seen purely as a response to personal experience, but Chris's 'personal' experience has all along been inextricably bound up with more 'public' matters. In Grey Granite she thinks, 'She'd finished with men or the need for them, no more that gate might open in her heart, in her body and her soul, in welcome and gladness to any man' (p. 268). This withdrawal is an understandable response to the suffering she has known in her life, but while the cold indifference which Ake notices in her at the end is in part a reaction against her personal disappointments, almost all her private relationships have been harmed by damaging structures in society, or by attitudes encouraged in men by such institutions as the church, or induced by brutalizing experiences either on the land or at war. Society has been in the broadest sense destructive for Chris - for the woman - and it is this which causes her to be not so much passive, as uncommitted; she turns neither to the 'Clouds' nor the 'Howe', as she thinks of it in Cloud Howe,

'She herself did neither, watching, unsure: was there nothing between the Clouds and the Howe?' (p. 254).

Critics usually assume that 'the third way' is to be that prophesied by Robert in Cloud Howe, the 'stark, sure creed' (p. 284) pursued in Grey Granite by Ewan. It might be suggested instead that between the Clouds and the Howe are the mountains, and the mountains are imaged as female. We see a last glimpse of them in Grey Granite 'waking, Titanic' (p. 218), implying symbolically that there is a female 'way' which might prove the salvation of this society, but which is never allowed to succeed. Women are alienated, and society fails.

It seems to me that Chris's life is presented in such a way as to establish a strong thematic concern with the role of women in a male-dominated society. Although A Scots Quair has attracted serious critical attention as a work which gives voice to 'the folk', and offers their view of history, critics usually ignore this parallel theme of the woman's role in history and society, explored through the life of the protagonist Chris, but also diversified and amplified through the many sub-plots and minor characters. While Chris's experiences are at the heart of the trilogy, they are mirrored in those of other women, and she is thus set in a context of female experience which makes it clear that she is not an isolated individual. When she is pregnant, in Sunset Song, she lies 'thinking of her mother, not as her mother at all, just as Jean Murdoch, another woman who had faced this terror-daze in the night' (p. 201). There are many occasions on which Chris talks with other women about female experience. After her mother there is Marget

Strachan, who gives her advice about men (p. 65), but disappears out of the novel, as Chris would have done had she chosen Marget's route of education. Chris's closeness to Marget is echoed again later in Cloud Howe, in her relationship with Cis Brown; and the fact that Chris kisses both women might be seen as hinting at a latent lesbian theme. However, Cis's name suggests 'Sis', implying that these scenes are important primarily as representing female solidarity.

Chris also has an understanding in Cloud Howe with Else Queen, who warms to her when Chris evidently empathizes with her over her boyfriend's insensitivity (p. 41). Later, in Grey Granite, Chris's partnership with Ma Cleghorn is based on mutual liking and respect, and is strikingly different from her partnership with Ake Ogilvie. Chris develops an understanding with Ellen Johns, too, in the last novel. These women share their feelings about life, but their experiences are also often strikingly similar; Chris's sufferings and experiences of rejection are echoed in those of other women. In Cloud Howe, when Chris is emotionally deserted by Robert, we see Else being physically and financially deserted by Dalziel of the Meikelbogs. In Grey Granite, Chris is abandoned by Ake, and we learn that Ma Cleghorn's husband had once been unfaithful to her (p. 54), while Ewan also leaves Ellen. Numerous lesser incidents illustrating the abuse of women further reflect on the central events of the three novels, directing our attention to the 'feminist' theme.

While certain social changes, such as the introduction of birth-control, have been a good thing for women, the trilogy indicates that

society generally is degenerating. Although each of the societies in A Scots Quair is imperfect, Grey Granite appears to show women most explicitly trapped, as is primarily illustrated in the life of Chris herself. Her oppression and sense of failure are most complete in this last novel. . This is partly because of all the societies shown, Duncairn has lapsed furthest from Golden Age perfection. In his essay 'The Antique Scene', Mitchell records the deterioration of Scotland: 'The history of Scotland may be divided into the three phases of Colonization, Civilization, and Barbarization'.[36] While the three novels in the Quair do not outline precisely these developments, they depict a similar process of corruption. Although Gibbon was critical of agricultural life in Scotland, he was even more intensely horrified by its urban life. This is obvious in his description of Glasgow in the essay of that title: 'Nothing endured by the primitives who once roamed those hills - nothing of woe or terror - approximated in degree or kind to that life that festers in the courts and wynds and alleys of Camlachie, Govan, the Gorbals'.[37] When society is at its most degenerate in the Quair, women are correspondingly at their most oppressed.

In Sunset Song, although Chris's society is in many ways narrow, we see Chris herself at her zenith. Her father, proving more liberating in death than he was in life, leaves Blawearie to Chris, so that in this novel she is, rather briefly, truly independent. She owns her own farm, and can choose to marry Ewan, who does not himself have any money. However, from this time on we see her lose much of her independence. After the farm passes to Ewan, her life

36 Scottish Scene, pp. 19-36 (p. 19).

37 'Glasgow', in Scottish Scene, pp. 136-147 (p. 137).

is never again so much her own. Her next way of life is dictated by her husband's profession; even their home, the manse, comes and goes with him. In Duncairn, Chris is for the first time alone and earning for herself. She has no property, no supportive family (apart from the very cool Ewan) or community, and the precariousness of her financial position is compounded by her vulnerability as a woman, and an uneducated and unskilled woman, in an alien environment.

When Chris's partnership with Ma Cleghorn is broken by Ma's death, Chris is again turned loose on a callous world. Ake's suggestion that he come in on the business as a partner offers itself as a solution; however, he makes this conditional on her marrying him. Grey Granite illustrates how economic complications surround marriage in modern society. Chris's previous marriages have been entered on in love, but this one is in some ways most importantly a financial contract; in effect Ake is buying her. Chris thinks, 'it would be with little liking, necessity only the drive' (p. 185). She decides against it: 'And on this day of all she must try to decide... sell herself like a cow, a cow's purpose, in order to keep a roof over her head... Better a beggar in Duncairn's wynds than sell herself as she'd almost planned' (p. 189). But Chris's resistance is further eroded by Ake's intervention on Ewan's behalf in his troubles, an act which shows the inter-relationship of the different forms of oppression in Duncairn. In order to save the rebellious Ewan, Ake blackmails the Lord Provost, who once raped a young girl, Kate Duthie (pp. 204-5); but in turn, Ake loses his job. This puts Chris under great pressure to marry and divide the business with Ake. There is, of course, an important contradiction at the heart of Ake's actions, for although

he uses the information about Jimmy Speight's past sexual crimes to save Ewan, the young leader of the workers, he himself is reinforcing another form of sexual exploitation in thus 'buying' Chris (although he may not intend to do so); and Ewan, who stands up for the oppressed working men, is never even aware of his mother's sacrifice on his behalf.

There is a good deal of recurring imagery in Grey Granite suggesting the way in which Chris has become a victim of the economic and social system:

> And so she supposed, behind this newness and those cool eyes in the mirror, the fugitive Chris was imprisoned at last, led in a way like the captives long syne whom men dragged up by the heights to Blawearie Loch to streek out and kill by the great grey stones. Caught as they were: she, who had often lain down in the shadow of the Stones (p. 165).

From the time when Chris first turned to the stones, seeking their links with primitive values, she has been at last trapped in the world which they have come to represent - the modern world in which women are victims.

While the male 'keelies' are shown to be badly-off in Duncairn, the novel also illustrates the plight of the women, who have particular problems in this society.

> And the wife would turn as she heard him come back, lie wakeful and think on the morn's morning - what to give the weans, what to give the man, fed he must be ere he took the streets to look for that weary job he'd not find - he'd never find one you had come to ken. Hardly believe it was him you had wed, that had been a gey bit spark in his time, hearty and bonny, liked you well: and had hit you last night, the bloody brute coming drunk from the pub - a woman couldn't go and hide in booze, forget all the soss and pleither, oh no, she'd to go on till she dropped, weans scraiching, getting thin and like tinks, and the awful words they picked up every place, the eldest loon a street-corner keelie, the quean - oh God, it made a body sick.
>
> And the quean would turn by the side of her sisters, see the faint glow of the dawn, smell the reek of the Paldy heat - Christ, would she never get out of it, get a job, get away, have clothes, some fun? If they couldn't afford to bring up the weans decent why did father and mother have them? (pp. 39-40).

There is a reminder, here, of the birth-control theme: among poor people unaware of birth-control, or unable to afford it, social problems are exacerbated and become self-perpetuating. Women are trapped in the family with the domestic chores (as is Chris herself) and with men unable to find work, there is not only an increase of domestic violence, but less likelihood that the young woman will be able to achieve the independent and fulfilled life which has already been denied her mother.

Gibbon's critical attitude to society includes not only analysis of women's oppression, but criticism of the limiting and limited roles society forces upon both sexes, and especially upon women. According to Gibbon's radical, and Douglas Young would argue, Diffusionist beliefs, primitive society allowed for greater flexibility; gender roles were less rigidly defined, and the sexes less set apart. In the Golden Age there would have been greater freedom of behaviour and sexuality was more openly expressed. In modern society as Gibbon sees it, sexuality is usually repressed, and women, particularly, are confined by the limiting conventional roles assigned them.

In Sunset Song, we see Chris still relatively free. Chris, whose mother's golden hair associates her with the Golden Age, and who herself has hair of a 'life-giving' colour, is quite spontaneous and unspoilt by civilization. Her father's attitudes are contrasted with the saner outlook of his wife and daughter. Although Chris has a strong sense of her female sexuality, she often acts with the lack of restraint more common, and socially acceptable in, the young male. When she is trampling blankets, Chris takes off her skirt,

and her mother 'gave Chris a slap in the knickers, friendly-like, and said You'd make a fine lad, Chris quean, and smiled the blithe way she had and went on with the washing' (p. 79). Chris's 'masculine' behaviour suggests her freedom from convention; her father's being the more conventional attitude in this context. Chris sometimes wishes she were not female, so that she could be more free. When there is a blaze at Peesie's Knapp, Chris fumbles with her clothes, in a hurry to get dressed; Will says, 'Leave the damn things where they are, you're fine, you should never have been born a quean. She was into her skirt by then, and said I wish I hadn't, and pulled on her boots' (p. 109). Many of her actions fly in the face of convention, inviting the criticism of the local community, for of course many of them have a more traditional view of a woman's role, and Chris contrasts with the other women in Kinraddie in this respect. Chris sometimes encounters male prejudice in Sunset Song, as when she tells the lawyer in Stonehaven that she hasn't made up her mind about Blawearie, and he remarks, 'Just? Hell, a woman's mind just!' (p. 146). This view is given a context by the fact that Chris is, at this point, in a relatively powerful position, and able to discount such narrow attitudes, since the farm is hers.

Chris's difference from others in the community is still more apparent in Cloud Howe than in Sunset Song. Now she rejects the traditional role of the minister's wife, getting up early in the morning to go for walks, eliciting from the local folk the judgement that 'no decent folk went up there at night, this creature of a woman was surely a tink' (pp. 62-3). She also refuses to enact what she sees as the do-gooding role expected of the minister's wife. Critics

often remark that Chris rejects political commitment, but it should also be noted that she rejects the more traditional and essentially harmless but rather reactionary kinds of 'action' offered to women by the WRI, for instance.

It becomes more difficult for Chris to lead a 'free' life as the trilogy unfolds. Although her father is repressive, the other important male characters in Sunset Song are among the most liberated we see in the whole trilogy in their attitudes towards women. Chae Strachan wants his daughter to become a doctor and escape the restrictions on women (pp. 63-4), and both Chae and Rob give Chris disinterested friendship and support. Although Ewan is in some ways more traditional, he insists that Chris leave her housework and take some time off with him (p. 196). In Cloud Howe, Robert introduces Chris to contraception; and he, too, insists that Chris not overburden herself with housework. He'd rather buy new socks than let her spend time mending the old ones (p. 30). Things are much worse in Grey Granite. Whereas in Sunset Song Chris could roam with relative physical freedom, able to express her individuality (however shocking that was to others), now we see her cramped and frustrated and we see her 'waiting' on others, forced into a much more conventional domestic role. Modern urban society, and the growth of the middle classes brings more limited and limiting roles for the sexes. The modern urban woman of the lower middle classes is presented in caricature style in the person of the typist Ena Lyons, (p. 29), whose repressed attitude to sexuality, and excessive concern with appearances are shown as ridiculous (pp. 244-7). The roles assigned to women in this society are reflected in the media. Chris and Ma Cleghorn attend a film, set in America, which suggests the powerful

modern impulse towards uniformity of culture and the stereotyping of gender roles. Chris, significantly enough, falls asleep, and what she sees of the film means little to her. Ma Cleghorn is herself relatively free from convention, but is more of a city woman than Chris, and more open to the appeal of media images. Yet while the film is presented, through the consciousness of Chris, as being absurd, the roles it represents are being enacted in this society by the likes of Ena Lyon. [38]

Chris likes Ma Cleghorn, because she is, like herself, free from convention and pretension.

> You'd liked her from the first, she you, you supposed you'd neither of you frills, you'd seen over much of this queer thing Life to try hide from its face by covering your own with a ready-made complexion out of a jar, or ready-made morals from the Unionist Club, or ready-made fear and excitement and thrill out of the pages of the Daily Runner. (Grey Granite, p. 31).

She contrasts with Ena Lyon, 'complete with complexion' (p. 30). Ma Cleghorn has a healthy sense of her own identity, not needing to search for a 'ready-made' identity, as is more usual in this society. Gibbon's attitude to female role-playing in particular is made clear elsewhere in his fiction. In the English novel Gay Hunter, the eponymous heroine, thrust into a Golden Age of the future, muses on the way in which twentieth-century women were distorted by their civilization: 'She thought of all the technique of display and

38 The plot of the film also echoes some of the events of the novel; although the woman in the film is obviously meant to seem absurd, the plot revolves around her difficulties as a woman trying to survive in New York. It, however, glamourizes the pursuit of women by men, and their inability to make a career or life without help from a man, whereas Chris's experience presents us with a real and unglamorous version of the same kind of story.

coquetry and attraction in use among the women of her time. Hellnblast, what a waste of life it had all been!' [39]

The restricted roles of the sexes in Duncairn, the repressed 'gentility' of the likes of Ena Lyon and Miss Murgatroyd, suggest the comparative sanity of Chris and her freedom from restraint. Chris's alienation in this context suggests that there is something badly wrong with this society. Rather than viewing Chris's withdrawal in this environment as merely suggesting her passivity, and as something to be criticized, we should consider instead the possibility that Gibbon is offering a critique of society through her. This critique is based on a concern with the role of women, and their struggles in a male-dominated and often destructive society. The life of Chris, the central character, illustrates that society is getting worse, not better, for women. However, Gibbon's critique of society is concerned not only with the role of women. I suggest he uses Chris, and the idea of 'Woman' in order to present a more general criticism of society as well.

V

Essentially, Chris is not only significant as a woman in a realistic sense, but as a woman representative of a Romantic, specifically a Diffusionist ideal. Gibbon saw women as being nearer to the undistorted ideal than men, an idea familiar to us from Romanticism. In his 'English' novel Three Go Back, Gibbon indicates that women are associated with the 'primitive'. Sinclair describes the Golden Age people, 'those earliest true men on earth - absolutely without culture and apparently without superstitious

39 Gay Hunter (London, 1934), p. 102

fears, cruelties, or class divisions. It means that Rousseau was right...', and the heroine Clair retorts that she has always believed in such an ideal: '"And I knew it - women always knew it!"' [40] Women, it is suggested, have always realized the sheer insanity of the world view represented, for instance, by the arms manufacturer.

Chris Guthrie, as a peasant woman, is associated with this 'primitive' value system, as opposed to the corruptions of civilization. She herself has occasional glimpses of the Golden Age existence, afforded to her in the fallen world of Cloud Howe (pp. 254-5). In Scottish fiction, as we have seen, the peasant woman often plays a doubly symbolic role, representing the virtues of the 'noble savage' revered by the Romantics, and the qualities also associated by them with 'femininity': spontaneity, imagination, nature, and moral goodness, and Chris has a representative status of this kind.

I have previously argued that the Romantic idealization of the woman can be in many ways reactionary and damaging. In the case of Gibbon, his Romantic view is complicated by his active interest in feminism. His ideas are applied more directly to modern society than are, for instance, Neil Gunn's, and indeed, have some links with certain strands in recent feminist thinking. However, it is not possible to discuss the role of Chris Guthrie only in the context of feminism, for besides her feminist function, she is being used for other purposes as well, some of which may seen contradictory. I would therefore like to look critically at Chris's role as a Romantic symbol.

40 James Leslie Mitchell Three Go Back (London 1932), p. 124.

I have remarked that Chris becomes despairing and 'withdrawn' partly in response to the rejections she suffers at the hands of the various men she marries. Rather than proving that she is simply passive, I suggest this is intended to show that men become distorted by the effects of 'civilization', whereas Chris, as a woman, is relatively free from distortion but suffers as a result of the dehumanization of the men. War is, in Gibbon's view, one of the worst symptoms of the disease of civilization, as we have seen. It is largely the responsibility of men, although in Sunset Song certain men such as Long Rob hold out against it; Rob is a notably sympathetic character. It also directly affects men: Ewan is transformed by war from a happy, innocent young man into a brutal and callous one. The change in his personality is not entirely convincing, because Gibbon is here presenting an argument through his characters, and Ewan's behaviour is intended as a statement about the effects of civilization rather than being illustrative of Ewan's personality. Robert's rejection of Chris in Cloud Howe is also related to the war, since his gassed lungs bring on the black moods in which he is hostile to her. It is also important, too, that Robert is a minister, since Mitchell saw religion as another of the great 'evils' of civilization: 'Religion is no more fundamental to the human character than cancer is fundamental to the human brain'.[41] We should see the presentation of Robert in the light of this. Christianity leads Robert to reject Chris: 'It's you or the kirk, Chris, and I'm the kirk's man' (p. 278). Chris sees Robert's commitment to religion as growing out of fear: 'the Fear that had haunted his life since the War, Fear he'd be left with no cloud to follow, Fear he'd be left in the day alone and stand and look at his

41 'Religion', Scottish Scene, p. 313.

naked self. And with every hoping and plan that failed, he turned to another, to hide from that fear, draping his dreams on the face of life as now this dream of the sorrowing Face' (p. 234), a view which seems similar to Gibbon's own view of religion as a distortive force. Chris, like other earlier female figures in Scottish fiction, is partly defined against the 'negative' force of religion although, interestingly, it is Robert's 'liberal' vision which turns him away from Chris, rather than an intense Calvinism.

Chris's resistance to Robert's creed - and later to her son's - is based on the way in which she sees such creeds distorting men.[42] She experiences Robert's callous rejection of her, although he calls himself a Christian, at the time when she is suffering most, having lost her baby. She sees Robert's creeds distort and fail him; first, the church, 'the times have changed' (p. 226); then his brand of liberal socialism - not in itself shown as totally worthless, and apparently mildly supported by Chris herself - which is let down by its supporters, as we see so often happen with political causes in the trilogy. Douglas Gifford thinks Robert, like the younger Ewan, represents a way beyond Chris,[43] but I suggest the whole trilogy presents a central opposition between Chris's values as a woman, and 'male' creeds. Chris represents a more 'primitive'

42 Angus Calder in 'A Mania for Self-Reliance', p. 108, contrasts Chris critically with more 'political' women, such as Maggie Jean, who goes off with her Labour doctor, or Miss Jeannie Grant, in Cloud Howe, a member of the Labour party. Mitchell himself was, however, very scornful of the Labour party, and Chris's scepticism thus extends to those areas of which Mitchell himself was so critical.

43 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 101. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

consciousness, which is often rejected by men, but which is in this context shown as wiser, and more 'true', and is characteristically associated with women.

The fact that Chris is a woman is not merely incidental. In Cloud Howe we see men presented as following 'clouds':

> Men had followed these pillars of cloud like lost men lost in the high, dreich hills, they followed and fought and toiled in the wake of each whirling pillar that rose from the heights, clouds by day to darken men's minds - loyalty and fealty, patriotism, love, the mumbling chants of the dead old gods that once were worshipped in the circles of stones, christianity, socialism, nationalism - all - Clouds that swept through the Howe of the world, with men that took them for gods: just clouds, they passed and finished, dissolved and were done, nothing endured but the Seeker himself, him and the everlasting Hills. (p. 196)

An opposition is made here between the men who seek truth in their creeds, which are ephemeral, and 'the everlasting Hills'. As hills are associated symbolically with women, there is an implicit opposition made here between the enduringness of women, and the search for permanence enacted by men. Chris's lack of commitment may be seen as that of the 'everlasting hills', while each of the men in the trilogy is a 'Seeker', searching for permanence in creeds that are inevitably transient, and overlooking Chris, the woman, who is more finally enduring. The association of 'creeds' with 'the dead old gods' links the male characters, rather than Chris, with outmoded answers. However it is male creeds which have more power, and women who are overlooked, oppressed or alienated.

Gibbon makes Chris a Romantic symbol of considerable power representing oppressed values, but it should be noted that her

symbolic status is never entirely separable from her 'realistic' existence. Chris's suffering as a woman is linked with religious martyrdom; so far this seems to have gone unremarked, although Ewan's 'martyr' status has been much remarked. Gibbon's preoccupation with the image of the martyr is evident elsewhere in his fiction, most notably in Spartacus, and while the martyr figure is usually male, Gibbon's creation of a female martyr figure has already been noted in the short story 'The Lost Prophetess', and a martyred female also appears in the Scottish story 'Greenden'.[44] Chris's martyr status in the Quair may serve a dual purpose; she stands as does the woman in 'The Lost Prophetess' for the suffering of women on a social and realistic level, and represents, like Gunn's Mairi and Elie, certain Romantic values which are oppressed in society. This duality or ambiguity makes the work extremely interesting.

Chris's name is I suggest, significant: 'Christ-ine'. Although Gibbon rejected Christianity, he uses its imagery for his own purposes as can be seen in Spartacus and in the story 'Forsaken'.[45] Chris is associated on occasion with Christ. When she climbs to the Kaimes in Cloud Howe, we are told:

> So up she had come, the sun was up here, she was out of it for an hour or so, out of the winking flash of the days, to sit and look from the high places here, as Christ once had done with the devil for guide.
>
> Idly she minded that and smiled - it came of being a minister's wife. What had the devil said to Christ then? Maybe Just rest. Rest and have peace. Don't let them tear you to bits with their hates, their cares and their loves, your angers for them. Leave them and rest!
>
> Yes, He'd said that, there wasn't a doubt, just as He stood by her saying it now, telling her to rest for the first time in years since that night when she last had climbed up the Kaimes, telling her to rest and leave them a-be, her cares for Robert, for that other who came and yet never came. (pp. 154-5)

44 Scottish Scene, pp. 69-79. First appeared Scots Magazine (December 1932), p. 168-176.

45 Scottish Scene, pp. 178-188.

Here Chris is associated with Christ being tempted by the devil. There is a further Christian reference in the final exchange between Chris and young Ewan. They eat together and Ewan makes a remark so 'out of character' it clearly has thematic significance; 'He said suddenly and queerly The Last Supper, Chris. Will you manage all right where you're going?' (p. 284). In fact, Chris, like Christ himself is going on only to death, betrayed by a society which cannot nurture her. That these references have generalized rather than specifically Christian meaning, is suggested by the fact that Chris is equally often set in the context of the Standing Stones, and ancient pagan religion. Like the Weaver's Stone in Weir of Hermiston, the stones are related to martyrdom. They are a place where sacrifices have been made in the name of 'religion' of an early kind. Chris, as we have seen, is shown finally as a victim of her society, of its creeds, including its religious creeds. At the end Chris imagines herself finally sacrificed within the circle of stones.

It is interesting that the circles of stones are described in connection with the 'creeds' of which Chris is so sceptical. Although it is generally assumed they represent the Golden Age, in fact the stones have a dual function. On the one hand they face backwards to the Golden Age, a reminder of past, primitive values, from which Chris gains comfort. Such values are also closer in her early experience. But they also represent the coming of 'civilization' and its corruption and destructiveness. Rather than representing as Gifford suggests, 'Chris's self as an enclosed, self-protecting ring' (p. 106), they may suggest the ominous circling

ring of civilization, the trap within which Chris is finally caught.

Douglas Gifford believes that we are intended to endorse Robert Colquohoun's vision in Cloud Howe, and comments on the 'curious' fact that it is Chris who closes the novel: 'It's stranger yet - for Chris of all people, cloudless Golden Age Woman, speaks for the Christ himself, who in John 19: '"gave up the ghost" with the words she uses, "It is finished"'. [46] It does not seem so strange that Chris speaks in Christ's words if we see that she is intended to appear on one level as a kind of female secular Christ figure, a Golden Age figure given further resonance by association with Christ himself and more generally with the religious martyr. This makes further sense of Robert's role. He rejects Chris in favour of the Church; in fact, in rejecting Chris, he is rejecting Christ in the deepest sense.

In Grey Granite, Gibbon expresses Chris's despair in language which again has Christian resonances:

> She leaned her chin in her hand and rested, the crumbling stone below her, below that the world, without hope or temptation, without hate or love, at last, at long last. Though attaining it she had come a way strewn with thorns and set with pits, like the strayings of a barefoot bairn in the dark (p. 230).

At the end of her difficult journey, Chris achieves not fulfilment, but a bleak and isolated sense of the futility of life.

46 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 105. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

I suggested in the chapter on Scott's fiction that there is a tendency in Romantic literature to idealize and even validate female suffering, and remarked that this tendency was apparent in Neil Gunn's novel Butcher's Broom. Gibbon, I think, is less guilty than Gunn of the charge that he validates female suffering. Certainly, like Elie, Chris is shown as passive rather than active, especially towards the end of the trilogy, while the male characters are generally more active, but Chris's passivity is not in itself presented as a positive or valuable thing. Whereas the passivity of Elie and Mairi is presented as 'wise passivity', and thus idealized, Chris's lack of commitment and her emotional withdrawal are shown as a human response to too much suffering. Her woe and alienation are painful for the reader, rather than being glorified or ratified. Furthermore, while Chris may be seen as representing certain 'good' values which are being squeezed out in modern society, especially in Grey Granite, she is also presented as a woman who suffers oppression and degradation in a male-dominated society, and this social context importantly contributes to our perception of Chris as a character in a historical setting, rather than merely as an 'archetype' of suffering femininity.

However, while Chris is remarkably complex in these respects, she is strongly associated with certain other Romantic clusters of ideas. She is, outstandingly, associated with the natural world, especially the idea of 'the land', and the association between the woman and the natural world is one we have already seen to be commonly made in Romantic literature. In Sunset Song Chris's relationship with nature is firmly established. The structure

of the novel is based on the agricultural cycle, and the various stages within that, named in the section headings, clearly refer to stages also in Chris's life. She is thus implicitly likened to the land, on which agriculture, the early sign of 'civilization', is being practiced. She herself finds sustenance in the land, and turns to it especially at moments of great personal stress. Her decision to stay at Blawearie is determined by her strong sense of attachment to the land (p. 142), and this affects her whole future. In pregnancy, Chris feels an organic link with the natural world: 'if she listened hard she'd hear the wisp-wisp of the beech leaves near to the window, quietening her, comforting her, she never knew why, as though the sap that swelled in branch and twig were one with the blood that swelled the new life below her navel' (p. 211). In this way, female life is associated specifically with nature; although it should also be noted that Gibbon was too honest to completely romanticize this connection, for Chris is shown to feel trapped in pregnancy.

Nevertheless, Chris's links with the natural world are strong throughout the trilogy. This is an important reason why she is shown as alienated in the city. In Grey Granite we see Chris cut off from the 'natural' rhythms of the land, and forced to live instead by clock-time, which is uncomfortable for her. (See, for instance, p. 25). Chris's new kind of work is compared to childbearing: 'Queer to work again in such fashion, use all your body till you ached dead tired, by the time you'd finished the upper floor your hips were filled with a stinging and shooting, like a bees' byke with bees, bad as having a baby, sweat in runnels either side your nose' (p. 33). However, Chris derives from this work

none of the satisfaction afforded by the 'natural' process of childbearing.

Chris feels sterile in the city, wondering if she is 'just an empty drum, an old fruit squeezed and rotting away, useless, unkenned, unstirred by the agonies of bearing a bairn, heeding it, feeding it, watching it grow - was she now no more than that herself? (pp. 115-6). It is reiterated that Chris is still young-looking and sexually attractive, so Chris's feelings of sterility are symbolically emblematic of waste and frustration rather than suggesting her actual sterility or uselessness. Chris's feelings may be read literally on a realistic level, as the tragic frustration of a mature, attractive, sensitive woman whose experience has led her, unhappily, to this point. Awareness of Chris's previously vivid and active life should alert us to consider critically the society in which she is so out of place and wasted. On another level, however, her femininity and specifically her female sexuality symbolize certain qualities and values which are exiled in the city, thus shown as an infertile wasteland.

Chris's sexual frustration is linked to her sense of separation from the natural world. It is as she works in the garden of the boarding-house that nature - here so pale and tame - reminds her of her physicality. She feels wasted and remembers

> all the passion of living put by long ago, wonder and terror and the tang of long kisses, embracing knee to knee, the blood in a stream of fire through the heart, the beat and drum of that tide of life that once poured so swift in those moments unheard - never to be heard again, grown old. (p. 116)

Certain phrases here are reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence, and suggest a vision of life which is intensely sensuous and indeed erotic. But it is not only physicality that is celebrated here, for Chris remembers and values in sexual love a spiritual quality, too; 'an antrin magic that bound you in one with the mind, not only with the body of a man, with his dreams and desires, his loves, even hates-' (p. 116). Emphasisizing human sexuality is one way of stressing aspects of human experience that have been neglected; Chris's spontaneous and spiritualized sexuality is emblematic of her fuller kind of existence, her ability to remain in touch not only with her physical self, but with those deeper levels of human consciousness with which modern civilization, as shown in Grey Granite, has lost touch. Like Lawrence, Gibbon sees sexual repression as symptomatic of something larger wrong with society; a character like Miss Murgatatroyd in Grey Granite is pathetic and absurd because she has never lived a full and spontaneous life; she represents not only sexual repression but a lack of human wholeness endemic in this society.

The emphasis on the importance of natural sexuality, especially symbolically embodied in a woman, lies, of course, in a Romantic tradition. Yeats's Dancer represents the idea of harmony and completion that Gibbon expresses symbolically through Chris. In the Scottish context, the sexuality of women, and their closeness to nature has often been stressed particularly in reaction against the repressiveness of Calvinism, and female figures are used to represent 'wholeness'. We saw this in Butcher's Broom, for instance. Like Elie and Mairi, Chris is a peasant woman, who lives

initially close to the soil, and her relationship with the land is not merely a literal relationship, but represents a wider range of meaning. Gibbon has much in common with Lawrence in stressing this idea:

> Both were sharply aware of the damaging effect of modern civilization on the human personality and urged that man should be more primitively himself, and reach down to those more basic and archaic levels of consciousness which still lie hidden in the civilized self. What both Lawrence and Gibbon were seeking was the recapturing of some ancient spontaneity of being which has been lost by civilized man, an almost religious discovery of the fundamental essence of living. This, and not any literal pastoralism is what Gibbon means by a return to the Land, timeless and unchanging. [47]

I suggested that the link between Gunn's Elie and nature was a somewhat limiting one. The link made between Chris and the land also has a limiting effect on the range of experience available to the character on a more realistic level in A Scots Quair. The close association made between Chris and nature determines her choice of a life on the land, for Chris must reject education in order to remain 'true' to her 'natural' self as a woman. Although Gibbon himself certainly did not believe, as did Yeats, that women should remain uneducated, the symbolic link between Chris and the land in this trilogy forces him to deny her a range of experience beyond the 'natural' world, which he defines here as feminine. It is, for instance, significant that Chris's mother stresses the importance of the land in Sunset Song (p. 45), over other areas of experience such as education. It is Chris's male heritage which is associated with the side of her which longs for learning:

> And at school they wrote she was the clever one and John Guthrie said she might have the education she needed if she stuck to her lessons. In time she might come out as a teacher then, and do him credit, that was fine of father the Guthrie whispered in her, but the Murdoch laughed with a blithe, sweet face. (p. 49)

47 Young, pp. 29-30.

Of course, it should be said that such associations are given context, so that any over-simplified view of the relationship between masculinity and intellect, and femininity and nature, is made difficult to sustain. We can see in the last quoted passage that John Guthrie's encouragement of Chris's education is at least partly selfish, it is to 'do him credit'; and this is borne out by the action of the novel, because when Chris's mother dies, Chris has to stay at home and look after her father. Will tells Chris: 'don't let father make a damned slave of you as he'd like to do. We've our own lives to lead' (p. 86). This controverts any simple idea of the symbolic meaning attached to gender. The novels' realism frequently undercuts any simplistic reading of the symbolic structure.

Angus Calder has argued that Gibbon does not make Chris represent 'eternal femininity', [48] and this is to some extent true. Chris is not typified in any such obvious way as Gunn's Elie and Mairi. She is much more fully realized as a 'character', and may not be reduced to the level only of symbol. The existence of many other diverse female characters in the trilogy also disallows the notion that the Quair offers any single definitive version of femininity. However, like Dark Mairi, Chris does have a kind of 'mythic' status, suggested by her relationship not only to nature, but to time. Like Dark Mairi, the woman in A Scots Quair is associated with the 'enduring' mountain. It is interesting to note the frequent link in Scottish fiction between the woman and certain aspects of landscape. Stones are especially important. [49] In Weir of Hermiston Mrs Weir and Christina are linked with the Weaver's

48 'A Mania for Self-Reliance', p. 108.

49 It is interesting that MacDiarmid was also fascinated by the image of the stone, as in 'The Eemis Stane'.

Stone, in 'Farewell Miss Julie Logan' Julie is linked with the Logan Stone, and in Butcher's Broom Dark Mairi is described as being like a standing stone. Stones are enduring natural objects, and in each case the woman is linked by association implicitly with the past, with Scottish history, but especially with a mythic idea of time, a transcendence of history. Like these other women, Chris is linked, through the image of mountain and stone, and the land itself, to a view of female nature as something timeless, essential and enduring.

The previous chapter of this thesis attempted to illustrate the dangers implicit in such a view of women. Certainly, Gibbon's presentation of Chris is remarkably complex, and his vision is also ostensibly 'historical' in that he believes the Golden Age once actually existed. His work rests on the assumption that men and women were created equal and alike; men have merely 'fallen' further from the ideal than women. Gibbon's view is thus less deterministic than Neil Gunn's, and more socially radical. Nevertheless, the Golden Age is only glimpsed in visions in A Scots Quair, and the fallen world is all too realistically evoked. In this context Chris appears to represent a mythic ideal outside of history, and an analysis of her role must confront this.

Although Chris plays a significant role in a work which deals with the political theme of women's oppression, she is usually seen by critics as a fundamentally 'apolitical' figure. This is an understandable and not inaccurate judgement, for although she is used by Gibbon to criticize society's attitude to women, she herself as a character is politically uncommitted. Just as Chris stands

for a Romantic cluster of values, so too she represents a vision of the world which stresses the power of the individual imagination to create its own kind of order. This 'apolitical' and 'ahistorical' vision counterpoints the political drive of the male characters in the trilogy. Chris, in moments of individual Romantic epiphany, achieves insight into the nature of reality. In Cloud Howe, brooding on the lost key to happiness, Chris thinks of Else and her compromised life, not seeking passion or excitement:

> And Chris raised her head as she thought that thought, and heard the trill of a blackbird, and she saw the spirt of its wings as it flew, black sheen of beauty, across the long grass: and the ripple and stilly wave of the light, blue sunlight near on the old Manse wall. And she thought that these were the only glad things - happiness, these, if you found the key. She had lost it herself, unlonely in that, most of the world had mislaid it as well. (p. 253)

This insight, that in such moments lie truth and happiness, is akin to Wordsworth's moments of revelation, or Gunn's belief in 'the atom of delight'.[50] If we consider what it is that gives Chris her moment of truth, we see the importance again of the natural world, but the language used to describe it is significant too. The passage quoted is poetic; sound is used to emphasize harmony, as in 'trill of a blackbird, shrill', and the internal rhyme of 'ripple and stilly wave'. We notice, too, the alliteration, as in 'black sheen of beauty', and the careful use of the unusual evocative word 'spirt'. There is an almost surreal use of colour in the paradoxical phrase 'blue sunlight'.

Although Chris is thus again associated with nature, and an ahistorical view, this is not a reassuring or escapist vision.

50 See Neil M. Gunn, The Atom of Delight (London, 1956).

The natural world is poetically perceived; it is beautiful and gives Chris sustenance. It is the key to truth, but the truth which it ultimately yields is a bleak one. If we consider again those items in the passage which stimulate Chris to a sense of gladness, we see they are transient: a blackbird glimpsed in motion, passing light compared to another transient if cyclical natural force, the wave. At an early point in the trilogy Chris has an insight into the relationship between beauty and transience. In Sunset Song, Marget Strachan tells her 'there were lovely things in the world, lovely that didn't endure, and the lovelier for that' (p. 65). This, like the imagery in the previous passage quoted, is reminiscent of the Romantic poets, of a vision more recently expressed by Wallace Stevens in 'Sunday Morning': 'Death is the mother of beauty'.[51] This paradox is early on in Sunset Song expressed in Chris's vision of the land as well: 'nothing endured at all, nothing but the land she passed across, tossed and turned and perpetually changed below the hands of the crofter folk' (p. 142). The idea of the only permanence being in 'Change' leads to her final perception in Grey Granite of 'that Change who ruled the earth and the sky and the waters underneath the earth, Change whose face she'd once feared to see, whose right hand was Death and whose left hand Life, might be stayed by none of the dreams of men' (p. 287). Here Chris has clearly become the mouthpiece for a particular vision of reality; and the passive acceptance of the inevitability of transience which she expresses is one of the constraints acting to determine her behaviour on a 'realistic' and on a symbolic level.

51 Wallace Stevens, Selected Poems (London, 1965), pp. 30-34 (p. 33).

In representing this vision, Chris must remain 'uncommitted' on a realistic level, and symbolically she becomes part of the landscape which she has perceived as representing both permanence and change, and the permanence of change. At the end she is emotionally dead, and symbolically inert : a mere stone.

However, Chris's lack of commitment is also associated with her role as an oppressed woman, and is thus tied in also with her socially realistic role. The interconnectedness of her many functions mean that we cannot legitimately consider any one of her roles without bearing the others in mind. Chris's lack of commitment leads her to a very isolated position within the community, and indeed within the novel. While this may be read in the ways already indicated, there is another dimension to A Scots Quair, suggested by its title, and not yet looked at here, which is also very important in contributing to that position. If we read A Scots Quair in the context of fiction about the Scottish community, Chris may be seen as representing something distinctively Scottish.

VI

Cairns Craig has noted a tradition of writing about the small Scottish community which presents an opposition between the individual and the community, a tradition represented by novels such as, for instance, The House with the Green Shutters. In the small and narrow community, he comments, 'It is only pure, unprincipled assertion of self that can oppose the community without having to leave it and it is such self-assertion that Gibbon dramatises in Chris'. [52]

52 'Fearful Selves: Character, Community and the Scottish Imagination', p. 31.

This particularly Scottish theme may have contributed to the intensity of Gibbon's emphasis on Chris's individual - some would say individualist - vision. It is interesting to note that whereas the previous 'assertive selves' of Scottish fiction - John Gourlay and his ancestors - were male, Chris is a woman. However, Chris should also be seen in a tradition of Scottish fictional women. She may be usefully compared with other isolated and solitary female figures in Scottish fiction : Madge Wildfire, Kirstie Elliott, Dark Mairi. Besides sharing with each of them a certain Romantic symbolic function, she also represents like each of them the native folk culture of Scotland, which is oppressed and even outcast. It is essential to consider Chris in relation to Scotland in order to understand aspects of her development.

Chris's role as a symbol of Scotland is important, for instance, because she is made, in Sunset Song to perceive a choice between 'the two Chrisses' : the Scottish and the English (p. 50). Gibbon's definition of Scottishness has links with definitions made by Walter Scott, for whom Scottishness was 'irrationally' attractive. Chris perceives Scottish identity as emotionally appealing. To remain Scottish, Chris must stay on the land, which she loves, and which represents national identity. To be English is more rational, and is associated with learning, but it is less emotionally appealing. The emotional quality of Scottish identity is also obvious at Chris's wedding in Sunset Song; and later, in Grey Granite, Ellen Johns responds to the expression of love in 'the dark, queer songs' of Scotland (p. 158). Chris cannot reject the strong emotional tie she feels to Scotland; her choice of remaining 'Scottish', however,

means not only staying on the land, but rejecting the 'English' option of education. Gibbon thus reverses Scott's usual unionist pattern, but the associations on which the idea of identity is founded mean that Gibbon cannot give us a liberated heroine; education, as Chae Strachan told his daughter, is the way for a woman to break out of her narrow lot.

Chris is also afraid of losing her identity as a woman. To be educated and English would be, within the terms she perceives, to reject her sexuality. This association is reminiscent of Redgauntlet, where masculine sexuality was associated with Scottish national identity. In Scott's fiction there is a close association between male virility and Scotland, and male effeminacy and England. Thus a correlation often previously expressed in male terms, between sexual potency and Scottish identity, and repeated here, means that Chris has to reject Englishness in order to remain 'female', but that again she cannot be developed as an educated and hence 'free' woman. Chris's lack of independent means, her lack of education, are significant on a realistic level in Grey Granite where, threatened with destitution, she is forced to marry Ake Ogilvie. Thus we see metaphoric associations determine the course of the plot on a realistic level.

Chris's role as a symbol of Scotland also limits her potential in other ways. Like Stevenson, Gibbon perceives Scotland as having great difficulty in maintaining 'her'identity . Chris, bearer of Scottish identity, like Stevenson's Kirstie Elliot, is doomed. Once again, the symbolic role dictates the possibilities open to the character, who grows steadily more and more weary:

Scotland is dying. In the modern urban world, she cannot survive.

The end of Grey Granite is markedly ambiguous, and there has been some debate about the 'meaning' of Chris's return to the land and her apparent death. Clearly, there are difficulties in interpreting the 'meaning' of the end, because Chris, as we have seen, is a character who works on a number of levels. She is a 'real' woman, whose life is interesting on a narrative level, and whose experience in society thematically represents the oppression of women. She is also, however, a Romantic figure, representing certain ideals which Gibbon held important but which are oppressed in modern society. She is, finally, a complex symbol of Scotland itself. These various roles are not separate, but are inevitably intertwined. Most critics leave out of their final reckoning some aspect of Chris's meaning; yet to misunderstand Chris, or to underestimate her complexity as a fictional creation, is to misunderstand or underestimate the trilogy as a whole.

Too often, I think, it is assumed that the conclusion of the trilogy may be seen presenting Chris's literal return to country life, a reading of the ending which implies not only Chris's 'conservatism', but the author's. Chris's rural retreat should not, however, I believe, be read in such literal terms.[53] Although the trilogy has a strongly realist dimension, I suggest that the symbolic associations surrounding both Chris and the land have been strong enough throughout to alert us to the strong possibility that this ending is not 'realistic', but symbolic, especially since Grey Granite is a much less 'realistic' novel in effect than its predecessors in

53 As it is for instance by Angus Calder in 'A Mania for Self-Reliance'.

the trilogy. It is essential to be sensitive to Gibbon's intentions at any given moment, and at the end, I think the symbolic and especially the national-symbolic meaning - insufficiently discussed by critics in the context of Grey Granite - is uppermost. When Will tells Chris in Sunset Song that Scotland is '"dead or it's dying - and a damned good job"', she responds:

> And, daftly, Chris felt a sudden thrust of anger through her heart at that; and then she looked round Kinraddie in the evening light, seeing it so quiet and secure and still, thinking of the seeds that pushed up their shoots from a thousand earthy mouths. Daft of Will to say that: Scotland lived, she could never die, the land would outlast them all, their wars and their Argentines, and the winds come sailing over the Grampians still with their storms and rain and the dew that ripened the crops - long and long after all their little vexings in the evening light were dead and done (p. 243)

In a way Chris is wrong. If she herself represents Scotland, then Scotland does, in fact, die. However, her symbolic power, even in death, is still very considerable.

Although critics usually state that Ewan is the final bearer of the book's 'message', those who acknowledge that Chris retains a hold on us characteristically argue it is because she represents Gibbon's own nostalgic attachment to the Scottish past. Chris's son, Ewan, is not interested in being Scottish, and as a boy in Cloud Howe rejects the Scots language which is so important in defining Scottish identity: 'You couldn't see sense in rubbish like swearing, any more than in speaking in Scotch, not English, as mother did sometimes, and so did Robert, and so did Else (but she couldn't help it). Scotch was rubbish, all ee's and wee's, you didn't even speak it in the school playground' (p. 156). Yet even Ewan, in Cloud Howe suddenly uses a Scots word, to Chris's surprise:

'She seldom heard a Scots word from Ewan, he brushed them aside as old, blunted tool, but the word had come on his lips as though sudden he'd sought in English and English had failed' (p. 266). Ewan rejects Scottish identity and goes off to London with English words on his lips , but the fact that even he occasionally seeks a Scottish word suggests the lingering power of Scottish identity.

Certainly, we do, I suggest, feel a great sense of loss when Chris fades and dies, as she does at the end in her role as Scotland. However , we have already seen that certain values are associated with Scottish identity, so our sense of loss is at their departure too. In Cloud Howe, Ewan only sees in Burns's songs 'silly Scotch muck about cottars and women, and love and dove and rot of that sort' (p. 160), whereas we have seen that Burns's songs relate to important and valuable human qualities and communal values. It is, for instance, significant that Long Rob's singing of 'Bonie wee thing' saves Maggie Jean from the daftie in Sunset Song, suggesting the power and value of this peculiarly Scottish expression of tenderness. In Cloud Howe Chris thinks of the kindness of the Scots, 'they would feed Christ hungry and attend to His hurts with no thought of reward their attendance might bring. Kind, they're so kind' (p. 122). Ewan's rejection of Scotland overlooks certain values associated with Scottish identity that are made to seem important throughout the trilogy, so that Chris's death is not just the end of Scotland, but the death of certain qualities which have been associated with her. Her demise marks the end, perhaps, of an ideal; if Gibbon is nostalgic, it is not only for the passing of Scotland, but for a whole set of values represented by Chris.

The final focus on Chris at the end of Grey Granite suggests her continued importance in the last novel of the trilogy, although most critics have argued, or assumed, that Chris's significance is severely diminished towards the end of A Scots Quair, while Ewan is presumed to be the new hero.

Clearly, there is some truth in this; however, I have argued that Chris is the protagonist, and I believe she continues to be so until the end. She is ultimately shown as alienated and dispirited because of her role as a woman in a male-dominated society, because she represents values which are shown as increasingly under pressure and because national identity cannot survive in the city. This development in her role does not mean she is no longer important; indeed her weariness and disillusionment call in to question the values of a society, which has no place for her and her values.

In fact, although Chris is now much less vivid as a character, Gibbon does continue to direct our attention towards her. This is done partly through the extension of symbolism introduced in the first chapter of Sunset Song, and pursued throughout the trilogy. This symbolism relates most immediately to Chris herself, and her perceptions of her experience. For instance, in Sunset Song, fog is associated by Chris with the transience of human life; people 'lasted but as a breath, a mist of fog on the hills' (p. 142). In Cloud Howe, she sees her husband Robert as pursuing vaporous dreams; while now, in Grey Granite, the mist symbolism suggests a

new sourness in Chris's life. The mist has 'the acrid taste of an ancient smoke' (p. 15), and a foul smell that reminds Chris of death, 'like the faint,ill odour of that silent place where they'd ta'en Robert's body' (p. 18). Recurrent fog imagery in Grey Granite directs our attention to Chris because it has acquired past associations with her life. However, recurring imagery also conveys the way in which Chris's life, and her perceptions of her life, inter-relate with the life of the times more generally.

We see this in the use of rain imagery. In Chris's early life, rain falls on key occasions; it rains at John Guthrie's funeral, for instance, and thus an association is established with death. In Grey Granite, rain makes Chris feel uneasy (p. 142), but while this may be seen as a purely personal association, rain falls also on occasions when she is not present and when there appears to be a general atmosphere of foreboding. It rains when Ewan and Ellen bathe in the darkness of the sea, an ominous scene, and again when the keelies go on their ill-fated march (p. 85). Thus the rain appears to suggest the unease of this society generally.

Snow and ice similarly gather meaning throughout the trilogy, directly in association with Chris, but also apparently suggesting wider ideas about society. In Sunset Song, Chris's wedding takes place at New Year but even on her wedding night she has her strange 'frozen flow' of thoughts about death and transience (p. 169). These associations, forged within Chris's consciousness, also surround larger and more public events outwith her control. In Cloud Howe, for instance, the General Strike and much social

hardship occur in wintry weather; Robert too has his eyes 'on the sailing winter below' (p. 198). In Grey Granite, Ma Cleghorn's death and the failure of Ewan and Ellen's relationship take place in icy weather, and social hardship and emotional coldness seem again to be suggested, both as part of Chris's immediate experience, and as a facet of this society.

While much of the imagery noted resonates meanings forged earlier in the trilogy, there are developments, suggesting that in Grey Granite things have got worse, both for Chris and society. Indeed, if Chris's role is read as I have suggested, the fact that her experience has deteriorated in quality suggests by implication that society has degenerated. Some such idea would seem to be suggested by the imagery of light, for example, Chris imagines herself in Grey Granite as a light-bearer: 'So the whirlimagig went round and on, Father, now Ewan, the hill little to either, only to her who came in between and carried the little torch one from the other on that dreich, daft journey that led nowhither -' (pp. 70-71). We see the imagery of light developed in the course of the three novels. Whereas at the end of Sunset Song there is still the image of the 'lamp quiet-lighted and kind in your heart' (p. 287), in Cloud Howe, the imagery of light is less reassuring with 'the paraffin lights of dawn' (p. 26), and in Grey Granite is still less so, being shrouded in mist, or unnatural (p. 27).

As Chris has been associated with light, and ends in darkness, this development of light imagery suggests the dimming and failure of her own life; however, as light is traditionally a symbol of hope and life, and appears to be so in Sunset Song, the failure of light

generally, and of Chris's life more specifically, would appear to suggest that this society is not a happy, thriving or hopeful one. The powerful cumulative effect of these symbols, introduced early on and developed in Grey Granite, means that we continue to perceive Chris, her perception and her experiences, as of relatively central importance, and we judge her society accordingly.

Gibbon directs our attention to Chris in other more obvious ways. He continues to present us with her perspective to a much greater degree than most critics suggest is the case. Although point of view is now obviously more dispersed, with the voice of the keelies becoming much more important, and Ewan's point of view being more extensively explored, we still gain more from Chris's perspective than from that of any other character, and whatever critics may wish to think, this device continues to stress the importance of Chris's vision, both her vision of society, and of life more generally. [54]

If Chris's significance as a woman and symbol is assumed to be of continuing importance in Grey Granite, and her increasing weariness and disillusionment are read as I have suggested in the context of what has gone before, then this last novel may be read very differently from the way in which it is usually read. The role of Ewan, in particular, must be reassessed, and a re-interpretation of his part in the novel leads to a very different overall reading.

54 For a discussion of point of view in Grey Granite, see J.K.A. Thomaneck, 'A Scots Quair in East Germany', Scottish Literary Journal 3,1 (July, 1976), 62-66.

I argued that Chris's oppression as a woman was a central theme in the trilogy, and that her oppression was most complete in Grey Granite. This theme is explored in the last novel through Chris's own life, and is further amplified by the experiences of other characters in the novels. Few critics have commented on the link between the struggles of the keelies, and the struggles of women to free themselves from exploitation, a link which is nevertheless demonstrated in the novel. It is suggested in the series of scenes featuring the Reverend MacShilluck and his housekeeper, Pootsy, scenes which counterpoint the more generally discussed theme of the keelies. Pootsy is sexually exploited by the minister, an oppression parallel to that suffered by the workers in the city.

It is significant that MacShilluck refuses to give a job to Ewan, who has applied to be gardener at the manse: 'the Reverend had refused him, sharp and plain, he'd seen the young brute was a typical Red, born lazy, living off doles and never seeking an honest day's work' (p. 236). It transpires he has also opposed Robert Colquohoun at some point in the past (p. 236). However, while MacShilluck is shown to be exploitative of women and opposed to the sympathetic socialist characters, Ewan himself is shown as unsympathetic to women. He seems oblivious to the ways in which society oppresses them. His blindness in this respect may be illuminated by comparison with Gershom , in the novel Image and Superscription, who has a nihilistic vision of humanity; when his lover Ester tries to tell him that there was once a Golden Age, he retorts, '"What the hell do you know about it, what does any woman know about it - war, the things we've seen and done and

endured?"' [55] Yet one of the most horrifying scenes in that novel gives such a remark context; Ester witnesses the brutal murder of a black, pregnant woman, by white men, in the American state of Kentucky. This means that she sees the ultimate in oppression: the victim is poor, black and female. Ewan, in Grey Granite, is on the side of working men, but he has no awareness of society's oppression of women, although it is illustrated in the novel, and indeed he himself has a somewhat disturbing attitude towards them.

It is obvious early on that Ewan is not interested in women. This might be seen as natural enough in a young boy and even an adolescent, in Cloud Howe (see pp. 166-7). However, when at the start of Grey Granite we see Ewan refuse the apple which Chris offers him (p. 28), it is a symbolically significant gesture. His refusal of women as an adult man suggests that part of his personality is seriously underdeveloped. Gibbon emphasizes the importance of sexual and Romantic love as humanizing forces not only in the Quair, through the life of Chris, but elsewhere in his fiction; the narrator of the short story 'Daybreak' says, 'We of the unmarried are emotionally unborn, even though, wistfully, we catch a glimpse of understanding'. [56] Although political commitment means that the radical leader - like Spartacus - must be single-minded, and must not be distracted from his cause by Romantic love, Ewan's rejection of women goes beyond mere firm-mindedness, and suggests something lacking in him. The recurring image of the

55 Image and Superscription (London, 1933), pp. 226-7.

56 'Daybreak', in The Calends of Cairo, pp. 73-91 (p. 78). First appeared in The Cornhill, vol. LXVIII (April, 1930), pp. 385-96.

eunuch in Gibbon's work, associated with 'political' figures in Spartacus and some of the short stories, hints that this kind of ruthless political commitment may be ultimately sterile. Ewan's rejection of women, both realistically, and symbolically, implies that this potential leader-figure is to be critically viewed.

In Grey Granite young Ewan's attitude to sex is one of detachment; he feels a mild arousal where Ellen is concerned, but thinks, 'interesting, supposed it was much the same thing happened to stags in rutting time' (p. 139), a view notably in contrast with the sympathetic view of sexuality expressed through Chris. Ewan has a markedly cold view of women generally:

> He thought of innumerable stories he'd heard, overheard when a boy, been told in Duncairn with loud guffaws and glazed eyes of mirth - about women and their silly, unfortunate bodies, about babies and death and disease and dirt, and something he supposed was lacking in him, Robert had once told him he was born a prig, he'd no humour and couldn't be cheerful and lusty and scrabble in filth and call it fun. (p. 59)

Ewan forgets that he himself is born of 'a woman's unfortunate body'; but the reader is not allowed to forget this. Chris is acutely aware of her link with Ewan in Cloud Howe; 'Strange that his body had once come from yours in the days when you were a quean unthinking' (p. 81), and in Grey Granite Chris thinks, 'Strange to think that this was your Ewan, once yours, and so close, so tiny, so small and weak, sexless, a baby that had grown a body tall as your own, slimmer, stronger, secret and strange, blossom and fruit from that seed of yours' (p. 28). This contextualizes Ewan's detachment as so much less human.

There have been hints in Cloud Howe that Ewan is not only

detached in his attitude to women but is capable of cruelty. He pinches a girl who approaches him in that novel (p. 258), and he throws a book at Else when she tries to kiss him (p. 159). He is occasionally violent, as when he throws the policeman down the steps in Grey Granite (p. 147) and shows no concern. While this action's callousness may be mitigated by the novel's exposure of police brutality, there is less excuse for his strange, almost sadistic feelings towards Ellen. He wanted:

> to stop and go mad and strip Ellen naked, the secret small cat, slow piece on piece, and kiss every piece a million times over, and hit her - hard, till it hurt, and kiss the hurts till cure and kisses and pains were one - mad, oh, mad as hell to-night!
>
> And she tripped beside him, sweet, slim and demure in act and look, dark cool kitten, and inside was frightened at the wildness there. (p. 160)

Ellen Johns has until now had inadequate attention from the critics, and what there has been, has been biased. Of course, critics prefer not to discuss her because a close examination of her role might harm their theories about Ewan being the hero. The usual view of the novel is that Ellen is presented as an illustration of the danger of distraction from the political cause. She herself settles for compromise in her beliefs, and tries to tempt Ewan to compromise as well. Seen in this way her role is unsympathetic. However, I suggest that Gibbon's presentation of both Ewan and Ellen in this relationship is ambiguous, and that her role is particularly complex.

A substantial amount of Grey Granite, including several important scenes, is presented from Ellen's point of view. This makes her a relatively prominent character, although this could not be guessed from the usual critical accounts of the novel. The fact that we

are admitted so much to her consciousness means that we build up sympathy for her (that is, if we have not already decided she is to be ignored). Ewan's treatment of her, I therefore suggest, must be judged somewhat differently than if she had been merely presented from outside. We must consider Ellen as she is presented and not pre-judge her.

Although Ellen is evidently meant to be seen as finally opting for a rather weak compromise, her part in the novel gains in significance if we see it in the context of other women's experience throughout the trilogy. Seen from this point of view, the Ewan-Ellen affair suggests not only the conflict of private and public life that can arise for the committed individual, but the conflict that arises between the methods and priorities of political activism and the cause of women in society.

A clue to Ellen's significance lies in the fact that Chris feels an immediate affinity with her. She thinks, 'The English lass was shy as could be but carrying it off with a brassy front, the kind of cool courage Chris always had liked' (pp. 61-2). She sees in Ellen the image of what a daughter might have been, and the similarity between Ewan and Ellen is stressed, suggesting all kinds of special links between them; even their names are similar. Significantly, only Chris likes Ellen's 'wee mouser' (p. 62, p. 82), emblematic of Ellen's 'masculine' qualities, an outward sign of her unconventional 'cool courage', her independence, her ability to take the initiative with Ewan. All these qualities link her with the younger Chris herself, in these terms also a 'masculine' woman, with her long legs, and her independent spirit.

At the same time, Chris is acutely conscious also of Ellen's innocence and vulnerability, which make her uneasy when she watches the development of the relationship with Ewan. She warns Ellen not to hope for too much from her son (p. 217).

Chris's sympathetic view of Ellen and the similarities between them, given resonance by our memories of Chris's past role in the trilogy, grant the young woman a status which most critics deny her. We gain access to her thoughts and feelings at many very significant points. We have seen that birth-control is an issue of some importance in the trilogy, and we are given access to Ellen's consciousness when she goes to obtain a contraceptive device. Gibbon's decision to focus on a woman's feelings at such a moment is surely significant in itself, but we should be particularly aware of the reasons for her decision to go away with Ewan at this precise time: it is in order to help Ewan recover from his shocking experiences with the police. Her effort on his behalf is, therefore, a selfless act of kindness, as well as a demonstration of her love for Ewan. Ellen is presented as being very much in love with Ewan, so that when we are given access to her consciousness just before and after she has made love with him, we are made very aware of her vulnerability at these most intimate moments. This means that when Ewan rejects her - and we are presented with this episode from Ellen's point of view - his behaviour is especially shocking.

His behaviour is thus given a context, although critics usually ignore this. Ellen has saved Ewan emotionally and psychologically by going away with him when he was severely distressed by the rape.

Her comforting of Ewan echoes a scene back in Sunset Song when Chris gave her brother succour after he had been beaten by their father. This suggests that women play a recurrent role as comforter to men. Chris is repeatedly rejected by the men in her life, so that when Ewan rejects Ellen we see the repetition of a pattern that has already been established. When Chris first realizes that Ewan and Ellen are having an affair, she thinks, 'Ewan and his Ellen, what had happened with them? Nothing but the thing that had happened so often as any fool of a woman might know' (pp. 227-8). This tends to imply the inevitability of female disappointment and pain, which is borne out by the novels' action, but the woman's perspective also encourages us to look critically at male behaviour.

If we examine the pattern of the relationship between Ewan and Ellen, we should notice that it is Ellen who first introduces Ewan to socialist ideas. She jogs him out of his early individualism, and articulates a vision which is idealist, imaging forth a one-time Golden Age: 'If there was once a time without gods or classes couldn't there be that time again?' (p. 73) When Ewan remarks, 'I've my own life to lead', she asks 'how could anyone live a free life in this age? - capitalism falling to bits everywhere, or raising up classes of slaves again, Fascism coming, the rule of the beast-' (p. 73) Ewan's remark that he is 'himself' draws from her the rebuke, '- You're not. You're a consequence and product as all of us are' (p. 73). Thus it is Ellen who first articulates the radical political views which Ewan is to adopt. It is true that at the end Ellen withdraws from full commitment; she 'cops out'. Nevertheless, while Ewan outstrips her in revolutionary ardour in the end, it is she who first politicizes him, introducing him to the ideas which he

turns so cruelly against her.

Ewan's rejection of Ellen is very callous. Certainly, Gibbon must expect us to judge Ellen wanting in this final failure of nerve, but that does not mean we should endorse Ewan's extreme cruelty when he says to her

> Go to them then in your comfortable car - your Labour Party and your comfortable flat. But what are you doing out here with me? I can get a prostitute anywhere.
>
> She sat still, bloodless, could only whisper: Ewan!
>
> He stood looking at her coolly, not angered, called her a filthy name, consideringly, the name a keelie gives to a leering whore; and turned and walked down the hill from her sight (pp. 275-6).

It is significant that Ewan calls Ellen a whore, not only because we have seen the tenderness and commitment which she has brought to him, and indeed the burden of responsibility for birth-control which she as a woman has had to bear; but because Gibbon's work clearly opposes the idea of seeing women as 'whores'.

Elsewhere in Gibbon's fiction the image of the prostitute is sympathetically presented, for instance in the short story 'The Children of Ceres'[57]. The fallen woman is not someone to despise, but to pity, for she is one of society's prime victims. The police in Grey Granite tell crude jokes about whores (p. 193), and this is very telling, as the police are consistently presented as cruel and perverted in this novel. It is important to note the way in which Ewan's own attitude to women has changed. When he is young, in Cloud Howe, he does not see 'whores' as degraded: 'You asked what whores were and he told you about them, what they did, how they slept for money with men. You said that you didn't see why they shouldn't, and Charlie said you'd a dirty mind, and would

57 In Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights (London, 1932), pp. 278-286.

soon be doing the same as Mowat' (p. 166). Here Charlie articulates society's conventional, but misguided and hypocritical view; the young Ewan at this stage has the innocent view which Gibbon sees as so much healthier and more natural.

As an adult, however, Ewan hurls 'conventional' insults at Ellen, and this is an important clue to his own growing corruption by 'civilization', for all his political idealism. He is sincerely committed to his own cause, but he has limitations. He callously rejects the woman who has loved and helped heal him; he is not even aware of his own mother's sacrifices on his behalf. Chris has been active on his behalf and indirectly is the cause of his release from jail. She has had Ake intervene for him, but this has meant an obligation on her part to marry Ake, although she does not want to do so. Ewan's release thus binds them both into a system which exploits women, and Ewan is, however unconsciously, perpetuating a system which in other ways he apparently seeks to end.

Critics usually argue that Gibbon presents Ewan's 'granite' hardness as the scientific attitude needed to 'save the times', believing that Gibbon himself saw this as the only ultimate answer. However, I suggest there are many hints that Gibbon is not at all sure about this. There are many signs that Ewan is not a life-affirming character. At the end Ewan supposedly goes off to 'life', but, just as all the other men who have opted to leave Chris in favour of 'Life waiting outbye' (a phrase from Cloud Howe, p. 27) have been gathered in by Death, first emotionally, then literally;

so too, there are signs that Ewan's creed is finally death-like. He is often described as being 'granite'-like; (e.g. p. 28, p. 63). It is significant that when he gets a job in the granite mason's in Grey Granite he is making grave-stones (p. 242). Ma Cleghorn describes city girls as being 'as hard and cold and unhandled as a slab of grey granite in a cemetery' (p. 82). The comic tone here does not entirely counter the strong image of death associated with granite. Chris also sees death in the city: she finds herself standing frozen '- oh like a corpse' (p. 163) in a city in which 'the frozen gleam of grey granite outside' (p. 25) is suggestive of the coldness of death. Ewan's granite hardness is only ambiguously a hopeful sign.

Other kinds of imagery surrounding Ewan suggest the ambiguity with which he is here presented. Chris feels a strong unease about him. She thinks of Ma Cleghorn's dead son, 'no growing to be a queer young man far from Ma and all she had hoped... Not leaving an unease that washed as a tide through one's heart, unending... dreaming on Ewan. How she hated the splatter of the driving rain' (p. 142). The sense of foreboding associated with the rain occurs also in the scene where Ewan and Ellen bathe in the sea which itself has certain significant associations. In Sunset Song the sea had suggested to Chris the idea of change: 'to her it seems restless, awaiting and abiding nowhither, not fine like the glens' (p. 144). Although the bathing scene might suggest an initiation ceremony, the darkness and the associations of the sea suggest imminent danger.

Animal imagery is also attached to both Ewan and Ellen; both

are described as like cats. References to cats in Sunset Song establish the ambiguity of the image. The 'daftie' at the start of Sunset Song is like a 'great, wild cat', (p. 69) establishing that animal's disturbing connotations. The older Ewan is also sometimes like a cat, especially when he is angry. The cat is traditionally a symbol of liberty in western iconology, but its ambiguous connotations are suggested in MacDonald's Lilith where the leopards are spotted and evil, and also white and benevolent. Young Ewan is 'a black-avised leopard' (p. 67) compared to Ellen who is like a kitten: there is a striking contrast. The cat imagery is also associated throughout with the idea of change. Chris thinks at one point in Grey Granite, 'here was nothing, nothing but change that had followed every pace of her feet, quiet padding as a panther at night' (p. 69); her nights 'went padding at the heels of unchanging days' (pp. 234-5). Thus the cat imagery is associated with change, but change that has undertones of menace.

All these associations suggest that the critics who endorse Ewan straightforwardly as the hero are missing some of Gibbon's own implied reservations about his young 'hero'. Although Gibbon was intensely political and regarded himself as a 'revolutionary' writer, we should be aware of the degree of critical distance he often maintained from Marxism. His attitude to some politically committed writers was quite contemptuous. Rather than being wholeheartedly a Marxist, Gibbon was a radical who could, at times, dissociate himself from specific 'party' lines. We see this in a letter he published, in which Gibbon is very scathing about certain left-wing views:

> To say that the period from 1913 to 1934 is a decadent period is just, if I may say so, bolshevik blah.....
> ...Not only do hordes of those "revolutionary" writers never read their contemporaries (they wallow instead, and exclusively, in clumsy translations from the Russian and German) but they denigrate those contemporaries with a quite Biblical uncharitableness and malice. With a little bad Marxian patter and the single adjective "bourgeois" in their vocabularies they proceed (in the literary pages of the Daily Worker and like organs) to such displays of spiteful exhibitionism as warrant the attentions of a psycho-analyst...
> Not all revolutionary writers (I am a revolutionary writer) are cretins. But the influence of such delayed adolescents, still in the grip of wishfulfilment dreams, seems to have predominated in the drawing up of this resolution...
> I hate capitalism; all my books are explicit or implicit propaganda. But because I'm a revolutionist I see no reason for gainsaying my own critical judgement - hence this letter! [58]

This passionate outburst strongly implies Gibbon's dislike of any narrowly defined view of political commitment.

His own answers to the problems of society vary in his works. Militant political action is one way of tackling the world's ills; the oppressed of the earth need leaders such as Spartacus. However, the extreme emotionalism of many of Gibbon's essays on political and social themes, and the confusion of his arguments in them suggests his ambivalence. Despite advocating 'scientific' ideas and action, he is often extremely Romantic in tone and vision. His Romanticism is apparent in many of his stories and novels. At the end of Image and Superscription the hero Gershom is united with his lover Ester April Caldon - her middle name is heavily symbolic - and it is implied that in their love for one another they find the strength to tackle the crises of the modern world. Thus he offers a 'private' solution to political issues: Romantic love. The end

58 Letter from Lewis Grassic Gibbon in 'Writers' International (British Section), New Left Review 1,1 (1935), 179-180.

of one short story, 'The Refugees', has a conclusion that suggests Gibbon's Romantic vision: 'He strode across the street towards Sednaoui's. I looked after him, then turned to the looping pencil scrawl, obliterating my realist story-line:-

> Nothing is better, I well know,
> Than love; no amber in cold sea
> Or gathered berries under snow:
> This was well seen of her and me.' [59]

The image of the Romantic lyric written over the 'realist' tale is a key to Gibbon's own work. Such Romanticism defies the idea of Gibbon the scientific Marxist, who is projected as the wholly approving creator of Ewan, the superman hero of Grey Granite. Ewan represents one 'way' of seeking to deal with the problems of the world, but not necessarily the way finally advocated by the novelist.

Chris and Ewan are used at the end to express two different ways of viewing reality. The bond of love that still holds between Chris and Ewan suggests that these two different views, although so different, are related:

> There will always be you and I, I think Mother, It's the old fight that maybe will never have a finish, whatever the names we give to it - the fight in the end between FREEDOM and GOD. (p. 285)

Chris and Ewan here appear to represent 'positions' in Gibbon's thinking, what Angus Calder calls 'a dialectic of thoughtfulness' [60] and in a sense I think Gifford is right when he says that both 'Ewan and Chris are on the side of Freedom' [61]. Both do have a vision of a world in which all are free and fulfilled, although one believes in seeking it out, the other is more resigned.

59 James Leslie Mitchell, 'The Refugees', The Millgate XXVII, 1 (October, 1931), 33-38 (p. 38).

60 'A Mania for Self-Reliance', p. 112

61 Neil M. Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, p. 115.

However, while most critics believe that Gibbon intends us to see Ewan's 'way' - political commitment - as representing the novel's final 'message', I believe, as does Patricia J. Wilson, [62] that the final dominant vision of the trilogy is that expressed by and through Chris. The wind that blew soft and warm in Sunset Song blows more grimly in Grey Granite (p. 98) and Chris imagines herself being stripped by a stormy wind. 'how quickly even your memories went, as though you stood naked in an endless storm shrilling about you, wisp by wisp your garments went till at last you'd stand to all uncovered' (p. 33).

When Chris is stripped down to her last self at the end of Grey Granite and dies, we should remember that truth is traditionally represented as a naked woman. The 'truth' revealed by Chris in the moment of death is bleak: ultimately humanity stands alone and unprotected, and at the end of it all, there lies only darkness and death. It is however, a 'truth' for which the reader has been prepared, by the presentation of events on a 'realistic level', and by the development of symbolism.

VIII

Chris has been the bearer of many meanings, and her range of reference must be estimated in the last account. Chris's vision has weight at the end because she has been shown, on a 'realistic' level, as a woman suffering in society, and her withdrawal is

62 'Freedom and God : some implications of the key speech in A Scots Quair', Scottish Literary Journal 7,2 (December, 1980), 55-79.

therefore justified and understandable. On another level, she represents Golden Age values which are being lost and overlooked in modern society. The fact that she is associated with these values is related to the fact she is a woman, and when at the end she is shown opposed to a man, this is not accidental. Men have been shown throughout the trilogy as living by different values from women, and society is all the poorer for this. Chris's withdrawal represents the disappearance of something good from society.

The focus on women could be read as having a feminist dimension; if we can accept the central association between women and 'essential' values, then Angus Calder's point about the applicability of the Quair to contemporary politics may seem a valuable one:

> Gibbon's trilogy can be related vividly to recent discussion on the left in Britain of the limitations of 'Leninist' militancy and the need to apply within Socialist politics lessons learnt from the success of the women's movement, with its more flexible and responsive methods of organization. The right synthesis of critical spirit and action might produce a mature Socialism. [63]

It is valuable to consider the Quair's modern relevance, and Calder's remarks are pertinent to this thesis insofar as Gibbon himself would seem to have been offering a critique of 'male' politics. However, tempting though it would be to end on that affirmative note, we have to question ultimately Gibbon's idea of 'female' values and meaning. Although he is evidently sympathetic to women, and presents an analysis of the way they are oppressed in society, he is still presenting stereotypic ideas of 'femininity' by

63 'A Mania for Self-Reliance', p. 112.

associating women with organicism and a relationship with nature, and by representing women repeatedly in terms of private rather than 'public' commitment, and 'passivity' rather than action.

Furthermore, as we have seen, because the central character Chris is given such a heavily symbolic role, she is only able to develop in certain limited ways on a 'realistic' level. Since she represents values Gibbon sees as being lost in modern society, she has to be shown as alienated in the city, the connection with nature prevents her becoming educated, and her philosophical scepticism dictates passivity. Elsewhere in Gibbon's fiction we see the way in which symbolic roles stunt the potential of the female character. Domina Riddoch in The Thirteenth Disciple, for instance, is a strong-minded and interesting female character; at the end of the novel, however, she is made much more 'conventional' because her activity is moved on to a symbolic plane in which she is envisioned as a symbol in relation to the hero rather than as a person. Domina's bearing of Malcom's child is clearly symbolic of 'hope' for the future, but it is disappointing to see her lose her identity and become yet another symbol of universal motherhood.

It must be acknowledged that in A Scots Quair, as elsewhere in Scottish fiction, male characters also play symbolic roles, and their fate is also often thus circumscribed. Robert Colquohoun, for instance, cannot survive, because he represents, on one level, the Scottish church. As in the case of other male figures representing an aspect of religion in Scotland - Robert Wringhim, John Gourlay - he dies because of what he represents.

However, my prime concern here is with female roles. Chris's role in A Scots Quair is particularly complex, perhaps the most complex assigned to any female character in Scottish fiction since Jeanie Deans. Whereas Jeanie was allowed to survive, Chris, like other female characters representing Scottish identity, Madge Wildfire, Kirstie Elliott and Dark Mairi, is doomed. She dies frustrated. The symbolic link between the woman and Scotland, it would seem, defines her potential. The implications for both, in life as in literature, are serious indeed.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

There are many ways in which the culture of Scotland and writers' responses to their cultural situation have defined the possibilities for the development of female characters in Scottish fiction. Concern with national identity, religious influences, and a strong Romantic impetus in Scottish fiction have all encouraged the representation of women in symbolic terms rather than as 'characters', and have induced the association of female figures with recurring clusters of ideas, many somewhat limiting, especially when viewed in a wider context. The symbolic significance of female characters, along with Calvinist-derived authorial attitudes, have often stymied the womens' development in 'realistic' terms : they die, are punished, thwarted or sent into exile.

There are also aspects of Scottish culture, however, which have contributed to a more 'rounded' view of women. The significant part played by folk culture in the literature has, as we have seen, contributed to the appearance in Scottish fiction of the strong, independent woman, from Jeanie Deans onwards, and encouraged a more sympathetic view of female sexuality than is characteristic of the Calvinist outlook. In modern times, writers have also begun to deal more self-consciously with issues implicit in much earlier material; the exploration of a feminist theme in A Scots Quair illustrates a new and critical awareness of the role of women in modern society, and of women's oppression, although it is a theme complicated by the novels' range of ideas and levels of significance.

Many male Scottish writers do still appear to view Scotland in terms of male experience. Women still play a somewhat one-

dimensional role in George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe, limited by Brown's symbolic use of female sexuality. An interest primarily in masculine roles in the novels of William McIlvanney means that women are less deeply explored there too. Jenny Docherty in Docherty is a sympathetic figure, but has something of the same 'earth mother' quality as other fictional Scottish mothers, notwithstanding the novel's 'social realism'. There is an interesting handling of sexual roles in Lorn MacIntyre's Blood and the Moon, which at first allows us intimate access to the consciousness of its one female character, making us party to her sexual frustration and torn loyalties. However, Deirdre rapidly declines into a madness for which the reader is inadequately prepared, and the ambiguous male characters appear to be finally endorsed; the confusion of authorial attitudes mars this potentially powerful novel.

However, other recent writers deal more self-consciously with some of the issues relating to women present in A Scots Quair. One hopeful sign has been the appearance of Alasdair Gray's 1982 Janine. Gray clearly runs risks with this ambitious novel, which foregrounds pornography and features (like so many earlier Scottish novels) a central male consciousness which is limited in its understanding, but he is engaging with major political themes related to the role of women in modern society, suggesting links between their position and that of Scotland. The sexual exploitation of women is shown to be analogous to the way in which Scotland has been treated. Scotland, imaged as a woman[1] is also exploited:

1. Alasdair Gray, 1982 Janine (London, 1984), p. 281. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

> But if a country is not just a tract of land but a whole people then clearly Scotland has been fucked. I mean that word in the vulgar sense of misused to give satisfaction or advantage to another. Scotland has been fucked and I am one of the fuckers who fucked her and I REFUSE TO FEEL BITTER OR GUILTY ABCUT THIS. (pp. 136-7).

Despite - or rather through - this self-betraying protestation, Gray's Jock is used to bring to the surface ideas which have not been consciously explored so fully before in Scottish fiction, although sometimes implied; and this novel makes connections between areas of oppression too often overlooked.

Besides the more obvious forms of literal social and economic abuse, Scotland, and women, have been exploited in literary terms, and often related to this, in commercial terms as well. Since Scott's early (and not entirely innocent) use of female characters to 'enchant' his readers, there has been much awareness of the market potential of the Scottish woman, whose charms have proved profitable to a few of the more unscrupulous purveyors of literary and other forms of entertainment. However, with the articulation of such ideas by Gray and others, it is to be hoped that a greater understanding may be achieved : an understanding of our own culture, of our literature, and of the larger power structures that dominate our society.

Gray's work is interesting, but has its limitations; for a fuller, more intimate and more 'authentic' exploration of women's experience in fiction, we must look to the work of women themselves.

Although this thesis has discussed the work of male writers, there have been many interesting female Scottish writers, too many of whom have suffered severe and unjust critical neglect. Although they have not been much discussed within the context of Scottish fiction more generally, there have been a number of novels by twentieth-century women writers which engage with some of the themes pursued over the last century and more by male writers. In these novels, the women also use some similar symbolic and Romantic forms, but re-work them to different ends.

One familiar subject taken up is the effects of religion. In Willa Muir's Mrs Ritchie, which is sadly out of print, the theme of Calvinism is explored through the character of Mrs Ritchie herself, whose pride and individualist spirit rival the monstrous egotism of the likes of John Gourlay and Gillespie. While Mrs Ritchie is not a 'sympathetic' character, it is refreshing to find a female character presented in terms which, in the twentieth century, at least, are in danger of being seen as exclusively 'masculine'. A different approach to the theme of religion is taken by Naomi Mitchison in The Bull Calves, which again, however, illustrates a new emphasis on female roles, exploring a woman's fascination with Calvinism as a force to which she can submit herself and thus abrogate responsibility for her destiny. The Highland woman Kirstie Haldane's experience of marriage to the Presbyterian minister Andrew Shaw is sympathetically presented through a first-person narrative, in which she relates her past, with the benefit of hindsight and age, to her young niece Catherine. In this way, as in Mrs Ritchie the woman is shown as an active protagonist, and not merely a

symbol ; indeed the dangers of the woman surrendering her individuality are explored.

A Calvinist influence may be present in a different way in Rebecca West's novel The Judge. Although not generally seen as a Scottish writer, West (Cicily Isabel Fairfield) had a Scottish mother and was educated at George Watson's School, Edinburgh, so there is good reason to see her work in a Scottish context. As the title suggests, this novel is concerned with the theme of judgement, explored more famously by writers such as Stevenson in Weir of Hermiston, where the institution of the law is itself emblematic of Calvinism. West's epigraph, however, indicates the new interest which underlies her theme: 'Every mother is a judge who sentences the children for the sins of the father'. The fatalistic vision implied here may be partly attributable to Calvinist determinism; clearly it is also deeply related to the female experience which is the subject of the novel. This illustrates the inevitability of man's betrayal of woman, which sets in motion a bitter cycle, explored here through the experience of a Scottish girl, Ellen Melville - whose name may be significant. [2]

2 As may that of Harriet Hume in the novel named after her. I am not suggesting that Ellen is Calvinist, in fact her red hair and her nature suggest she is all that Calvinism supposedly represses. However the fact that West chooses the names of certain Scottish thinkers for her female protagonists suggests her awareness - possibly subconscious - of Scottish culture and ideas.

Just as these women writers all show an explicit or implicit concern with Calvinism, so too they present Scotland in terms of romance, symbol and myth. The Romantic protagonist now becomes female; like Stevenson's Archie Weir, West's Ellen Melville is discontent in grey, dour Edinburgh, its repressiveness symbolized in the figure of 'Mr Philip', son of Mr Mactavish James, Writer to the Signet. Ellen seeks instead romance and colour in marriage to Richard Yaverland, whose personality and South American connections represent to her all that she has been so far denied in life. Scotland is also restrictive for Willa Muir's Elizabeth in Imagined Corners, which expresses an ironical view not only of Scotland's failure to deliver Romantic fulfilment, but of the traditional romance structures; Elizabeth's heroically-named husband Hector proves to be no mythic hero. She too must leave both him and the community to find a fuller life. Significantly she goes abroad not with a man but with Elise, whose name, similar to her own, suggests that Elizabeth has found her identity at last, a reworking perhaps of the romance idea of the two heroines.

Mitchison's The Bull Calves is more 'positive' in its symbolic analysis of Scottish identity, but it also offers an interesting meditation on previous symbolic fictions by male writers. Black William's 'projection' of his 'soul' on to the Red Indian woman he once married may be read as a comment on the Scottish fascination with 'the primitive' especially embodied in a woman. Although like other writers of the time, such as Gunn, Mitchison uses Jungian ideas, she maintains a critical distance,

related, as she comments in her notes to the novel, to her awareness of Jung's male biases.[3]

There is clearly a strong interest among these three women writers in dealing with Scottish experience and identity, and in borrowing, fracturing and reworking the modes used by men to their own ends, often the exploration of female roles and themes related especially to female experience. In some of their novels a 'feminist' theme is explicitly present. The ending of Willa Muir's Imagined Corners may be read as an affirmation of the woman's need to establish her identity alone or in the company of other women. Besides its central preoccupation with women's experience, The Judge offers some fine descriptions of a suffragette rally in Edinburgh, and Ellen's activities as a young supporter of the Movement, scenes which are not only among the most vividly realized in the novel, but of some considerable historical interest. Indeed, Rebecca West and Naomi Mitchison are widely recognized for their important contributions to feminist thinking and action in twentieth-century Britain, while Willa Muir is less well known, but is the author of a Hogarth essay on the position of women; and the feminist interests of all three women may be seen reflected in their fiction in different ways.

While all the novels discussed very briefly here may be criticized as in some ways 'unsatisfactory', they deserve more recognition than any of them has yet had, and they have a special importance for Scottish women. They deal with areas of

3 Naomi Mitchison, The Bull Calves (London, 1947), 'Notes', pp. 511-517.

experience neglected by male writers, present female characters generally more fully, and offer a different perspective on experience. It is important for Scottish women to become aware of this female literary heritage, not only as a corrective to the 'male' tradition which is so strongly dominant, but because the literary exploration of female experience by women can have the non-literary effect of 'validating' the real life experience of women in Scotland; although once again, it is disturbing to note the tendency to equate 'fulfilment' with departure from Scotland.

It is also important for women to become aware of these and many other Scottish women writers of the past, because they can offer precedents for the writers of today. There is a growing awareness of the need for a fictional tradition on which women can build, but while such a 'tradition' is gradually being made visible in the English and American contexts, in Scotland it is still almost completely invisible - it is there, if only we can work to recover it.

Certainly, some Scottish women writers have achieved recognition. Muriel Spark has received international acclaim; and yet she is hardly ever seen as a Scottish writer, although she has forged one of the more powerful myths of modern Scottish identity in her one obviously 'Scottish' novel, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. However, there are many other 'female' versions of Scotland less well known, and it is to the undervalued women writers of Scotland that we must increasingly turn for an account of what it is to be a Scottish woman, and for alternative visions of Scottish experience and identity.

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